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THE DIVINE VOICE

VOLUME 1

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DISCOURSES OF HIS HOLINESS
SRI. CHANDRASEKARENDRA SARASVATI
PARAMACHARYA OF SRI. KANCHI KAMAKOTI PEETHAM

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DISCOURSES OF HIS HOLINESS SRI. CHANDRASEKARENDRA SARASVATI PARAMACHARYA OF SRI. KANCHI KAMAKOTI PEETHAM

Rendered into English by P.G.Sundararajan (CHITTI) from the original Tamil compilation by Ra.Ganapati, entitled

DEIVATTIN KURAL.

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PREFACE

Sri Adi Sankara appeared as the incarnation of Parameswara when he was born to Sri Sivaguru and Aryambal at Kaladi in Kerala. He became a sanyasi when he was eight. He travelled all over Bharatavarsha several times and expounded the Vedas, Vedantam and other aspects of Hindu Philosophy among the people. The only Supreme Being, the Paramatma, is the Truth. Idol worship, puja rituals, and Karma Siddhantha were gradually approved by him as the means to reach that Paramatma.

At last, he came to Kanchipuram, one of the Mokshapuris (Cities of salvation) of Bharata country and consecrated the Sri Chakra designed by his own hands before Sri Kamakshi .

He presided over Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham which is celebrated in the Puranas as being without a beginning, and arranged for the continuation of the propagation of his ideals.

In that Peetham there have been sixty-eight Acharyas. Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati Swamigal adorned Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham as its sixty-eighth Acharya. He was born to Sri Subramanya Sastri and Mahalakshmi and was named as Sri Swaminathan. He was endowed with Easwara bhakthi and the power of intelligence from childhood. He had mastered many languages even while he was twelve. In his thirteenth year he ascended the Sri Kamakoti Peetham as its sixty-eighth head.

Since then he became well-versed in puja, tapas, rituals, Vedanta and other spiritual aspects. He also travelled all over the country. People in our country and those in foreign lands worshipped him as a God among them and as a saint.

In 1993, he reached the age of 100. His birth centenary was celebrated all over the world in many ways. On the 8th January, he shed his mortal frame and is now shining as the light of wisdom.

Sri Jayendra Sarasvati Swamigal as his successor and Sri Sankara Vijayendra Swamigal as the subsequent successor are now adorning Sri Kamakoti Peetham.

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All the Tamil discourses of Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati Swamigal have been compiled and published under the title, "DEIVATTIN KURAL", so that all may be able to read the discourses, Sri Kanchi Kamokoti Peetham has come forward to publish them in English (translation), entitled, THE DIVINE VOICE. We request the public to benefit from these books and obtain the blessings of Sri Kamakshi Amman, the presiding Goddess of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham.

It is a rare privilege to have been commanded by Jagadguru Sri Jayendra Sarasvati Swamigal, Acharaya of Sri. Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham to render into English, the sacred discourses of His Holiness the Paramacharya for publication during the centenary celebrations. I have approached the task with humility, aware of my limitations in bringing out the full import of the profound thoughts of the Paramacharya contained in the great work, DEIVATTIN KURAL, compiled in Tamil by Ra.Ganapati. I have undertaken the task with the confidence born of the gracious blessings of His Holiness Sri. Jayendra Sarasvati Swamigal.

I have to thank Sri. K.R.A. Narasiah and Sri. V. Venkataramani for their invaluable assistance in providing fair copies of the manuscript through their word processors and I also thank the writer of the Foreword.

P.G.Sundararajan(Chitti)

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FOREWORD

According to the directions of His Holiness Sri Jayendra Sarasvati Swamigal, Acharya of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetha, I am obliged to write a short note about this brochure containing the translation into English, of some of the lectures delivered in Tamil, by Pujyasri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati Swamiji, about 35 years ago.

Many centuries ago, Sri Paramesvara incarnated as Sankara Bhagavatpada at Kaladi, in Kerala, in the extreme South of Bharat. He made extensive tours on foot through the length and breadth of India and curbed the activities of non-vedic heretics, established the Veda Dharma on a stable basis and propagated the Advaita discipline effectively.

For the perpetual protection of our religion and the propagation of the Advaita philosophy, he established a number of monastic institutions at cardinal and important sacred centres that he had visited, during his travels spread over a period of well nigh 20 years. Adi Sankara spent the last few years of his short span of life of thirty-two years, in the Southern Mokshapuri of Kanchi. During his stay in this sacred city, he got the city remodelled, reconstructed the three important temples in the city - the temples of Sri Ekamranatha, of Sri Kamakshi and Sri Varadaraja and set the mode of worship in these temples on the Vedic basis. He consecrated the Srichakra, drawn with his own hands, in front of Devi Kamakshi, for the darshan and benefit of devotees. Sankara ascended the Sarvajna peetha (the seat of Omniscience) at Kanchi, even as he did in Kashmere (Srinagar) in the North. He also founded a matham or monastery at Kanchi for his own residence and was its first Acharya. He initiated a boy of seven years into the ascetic order, nominated him as his successor in the peetha, gave him the sanyasa name of Sarvajnatman and placed him under the care of Suresvaracharya, one of his important disciples.

In the long and unbroken line of Acharyas of the Kanchi Sankaracharya Math, there have been many illustrious scholars and tapasvins. Sri Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati, the 68th Acharya of the Kanchi Peetha ascended the peetha in 1907 A.D. in his thirteenth year. He is the greatest spiritual luminary of this 20th Century. He has been acclaimed as a 'Living God' by the vast mass of devotees in this country and abroad. His lectures (in Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Hindi, etc.) delivered during his sojourn in several parts of India, have been published. His discourses in Tamil which have been printed and published under the

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title 'Deivattin Kural' in six volumes, running into thousands of pages, are being read, by the Tamil people living all over the country and abroad.

Sri Jayendra Sarasvati nominated as successor by the Great Acharya Chandrasekharendra, in 1954, has also travelled all over India, a number of times and delivered lectures on our Dharma, in different languages. He has been keen on following the footsteps of his predecessor preceptor. Sri Jayendra Sarasvati Swami has also ordained as his successor on the peetha, Sri Sankara Vijayendra about 10 years ago.

Translating a work from the original in some language into another is rather a hard task. Sri Sundararajan (Chitti), has taken pains to present the English translation of the lectures (in Tamil) of the Maha Swamigal, in as clear a manner as possible. He deserves to be congratulated for his efforts. It is hoped that devotees who do not know to read and understand works in Tamil, may do well to get this brochure (in English) and benefit by going through it.

A. Kuppuswami
(Guru Kainkaryamani)
Kancheepuram
12.3.94

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VINAYAKA

Temples of Vinayaka everywhere is the special feature of Tamilnadu. Without any structure containing ceiling and tower and even under trees there are many Pilliayars in the open. On the banks of rivers, under the trees Pilliayar sits and bestows grace on the people. Calling this deity Pilliayar with love and devotion is the tradition in Tamilnadu. He is the eldest son of the Universal parents, Parvati and Parameswara. Since he is the pillai meaning son we call him Pilliayar with respect.

'Kumaran' also means son. Kumara denotes the younger son, Subrahmanya of Paravati and Parameswara. Though we call him Kumaran in Tamil we do not refer to him as Kumaranar. We give the appellation 'yar' only to the elder son. He is the first Child God. But he was there before everything in the beginning of things; he is the first to uplift the devotees. Avvaiyar was a devotee of the Pranava in the form of Pilliayar, also known as Ganapati. If we chant the "Vinayakar Ahaval" composed by her we can attain universal knowledge. Sundaramurthi Nayanar and Cheramaan Perumal Nayanar set out for Kailas. They wanted to take Avvaiyar also. As Avvaiayar was performing puja to Vinayaka they hastened her to finish it soon and join their pilgrimage. She demurred and said that Vinayaka worship was itself Kailasam for her. So they left. Avvaiyar perfomed the puja in an elaborate manner without hurrying. At the close of the puja, Vinayakar lifted her with His trunk and transported her to Kailas in one move. Only after she reached Kailas, could Sundaramurthy and Cheraman Perumal could reach there. There Cheraman Perumal sang the "Thirukkailaya Jnana Lila". Saint Arunagiri in his Thiruppugazh refers to Subrahmanya as the God who is in the Chera country and connects the incident with Kumaraswami. The elder son Pillaiyar is already directly involved in the incident. He had taken Avvaiyar to Kailas in a trice thus performing a great act of grace without much effort.

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VINAYAKA : COMPENDIUM OF PHILOSOPHY

Every little aspect of Vinayaka is full of philosophy. Why do we break cocoanuts for Pillaiyar ? It is said that Vigneswara asked his father, the Easwara, to give his head to him as offering.

Mahaganapati is satisfied only when what is considered to be the most valuable is sacrificed. It is a symbol of such a great sacrifice that Easwara has ordained that we should offer cocoanut which has three eyes like Easwara. The custom of breaking cocoanut by hurling it on the ground is peculiar to Tamilnadu. The fragments resulting from such a manner of breaking belong to the children. This truth was revealed to me by a child. In 1941, I was observing Chaturmasya at Nagapattinam. There, the custom of breaking cocoanuts was observed traditionally. Children would flock to the place in great numbers so that there would be scarcely space for tossing the cocoanut. My disciples would be nervous of the jostling children lest they should fall on me. They used to caution the children not to crowd around me. One of the boys promptly retorted "What right have you to prevent us from coming here, having offered the cocoanut to Pillaiyar?" He added that they would continue to gather to collect the fragments. From the assurance with which he spoke I realised that the right to collect the broken pieces was the children's.

If you break the skull of ego, there is the nectar of the tender nut, is the lesson taught by the custom of breaking the cocoanut by hurling it.

There is no deity more burly than Ganapati. Elephant's head ; big belly; stout frame -- he is known as the one having the gross body. He is like a hill. Yet he is a little child. What is special about a child? A child should eat a lot. The body should not be lean. An ascetic cannot have a big body by eating a lot. That would not suit his state. A child is beautiful only if it is bonny and eats a lot. This Child-God demonstrates the fact that children should be sturdy.

He is like an elephant. Contrary to His girth His vehicle the mouse is tiny. He is having it as his vehicle. It is not the vehicle that makes Him great. Other gods have vehicles like a bull, a horse or a bird. It is the deity that makes the vehicle great. In order to lend dignity to the vehicle, He is like a doll of reed without weight. This does not make it uncomfortable. But He maintains His body in such a manner that the vehicle would

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derive respect and importance. He proves that though he appears to be gross he would not burden the hearts of the devotees.

Every animal has its importance in a part of its body. The importance of the deer is in its tail; of the peacock it is in the feather. It maintains its feather with care. The elephant always wets its tusks and keeps it clean. This Elephant-God broke one of His tusks and wrote the Mahabaratha with it. Thus this God proved that it is more important to expound dharma than to have something that is beautiful, respectable and dignified. By sacrificing His tusk Vinayaka has demonstrated that one should give up everything for justice, dharma and knowledge. God does not need any tool as such. This is an instance of the fact that He can use anything as a tool. Once He destroyed an asura with His tusk. When He wrote the Mahabaratha it became a pen.

The moon, the seas and the elephant are things which fascinate us always. However long and how many times we keep looking at these, we derive happiness. His being in the shape of an elephant is the philosophy of bliss, the complete fringed happiness.

He was in happiness. When Bandasura halted the forces of Ambal by throwing vigna weapons, Parameswara looked at her with happiness.

The result was this child Vignesvara. This child destroyed the weapons and helped His mother.

As He is the son of Paravati - Parameswara and as He was born in the beginning of the world, we call him Pillaiyar which means 'son'.

Whatever deity we want to worship,we must first obtain the grace of Vinayaka so that our purpose would be served without any hindrance. Ganapatyam is the name of the religious practice which worships Him as the first and most important form of God.

There is a story which says that it is Mahavishnu who taught the practice of worshipping Vinayaka by the exercise of bending and straightening while holding both our ears with our fingers. Once Vinayaka who is the nephew of Mahavishnu, playfully snatched the chakra of Mahavishnu and put it in his mouth. It was impossible to get it from Pillaiyar as He was very strong. Even threats would not serve the purpose. Mahavishnu thought of retrieving it by making Vinayaka laugh when the chakra would fall out from His mouth. So He caught hold of His

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ears with four hands and began to dance. Vinayaka found it funny and laughed heartily. The chakra fell out and Mahavishnu got it back.

The original version of the word which describes this kind of worship is "Dorbhi : Karnam". Dorbhih : means 'by two hands'; 'Karnam' denotes ears. 'Dorbhi Karnam' means holding the ears by the hands. This is familiarly known as Toppukarnam, in Tamil.

Any activity can progress only when there is the grace of Vigneswara. Pillaiyar is the beautiful Child-God who removes hurdles and bestows full grace. Let us lead good lives without any difficulties, by praying to Him and offering puja to Him .

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ARE WE GOD? IF NOT ---?

Sri Adi Sankra Bagavatpada said that Jeevan and Brahman are the same. That is, we are God, he says. "Hiranya Kasipu also said 'I am the God'. But God himself had to destroy him by appearing in the form of Narasimha. Is what the Acharya said the same as what Hiranya Kasipu said?

No. When Hiranya Kasipu said that he was God, he said it in the egoistic sense that there is no God except himself. But Bhagavatpada said we are also God because there is nothing else except God. He also says that if Jeevan forsakes his egoism, he merges into Brahmam and himself becomes Brahmam. We are frail like the drops of water in a spoon. God is all powerful like the ocean. The water in the spoon also came from the ocean. This drop forsaking its identity and ego must also become the ocean by merging into it.

If we are not God, we must be something other than God. If so it would mean that there are other things than Paramatma. That is, it would mean that Paramatma is also one of the many things. It would also mean that these things come into being without any relation to Him. If that is so, He would not be Paramatma or God. He is God only so far as He is the all powerful force. If all are He, can we alone be separate? Hence the Advaitins who speak apparently in an egoistic manner, that we are God, do not belittle His greatness. On the contrary they say in modesty that Jeevan is not God; he is nothing much; He is great; Jeevan is something

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else; he is separate. Others include Him in many things and reduce His greatness without knowing. If He is everything we must also be in Him.

He who is like the ocean diminishes his power and appears as water in river, in well, in big vessels, in pots and in a spoon. In this He provides for sin and virtue in the case of human beings and appears as Himself beyond the stage of sin and virtue. When it is man, He gives him a mind and makes him experience the result of sin and virtue.

As our minds are never still, we cannot all of a sudden pass beyond the stage of sin and virtue and realise that we are He. Hence, even when we are He, we have to pray for His grace to experience the stage. He is the greatest, (God). We are nowhere. He is the great ocean; we are the drop of water -- with this thought we have to look upon Him with devotion in the beginning.

It is the mind given by God that makes us different from Him. This mind cannot be asked to disappear. So with the same mind, we must attach ourselves only to Him. He has made mind into a monkey. That monkey has now got hold of the body. But the body is capable of decline. The mind should give up this rotten fruit. The only fresh fruit which does not rot is the Paramatma. We must practice to attain that by abandoning the consciousness of the body. It is for this that bakthi, puja and pilgrimage are ordained. If we improve ourselves in this way and forsake the ego and the consciousness of the body, the difference that He is Paramatma and that we are Jeevatma would disappear and we would become He without distinction. We would sit in the stage sung by Arunagiri that "you are not separate, I am not separate".

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ADVAITA

All of us know that Advaita is the philosophy adumbrated by Adi Sankara Bhagavatpada. What is Advaita? "Dvi" means two. As 'Dvi' is two, 'Dvaitam' means the thought of there being two. Advaita means "there being no second (no two)".

Which two are not there? Now there is one supreme being who is God. We think that we, as human beings, are there besides Him. There is no such thing as two. There is nothing besides the true being which is God (Brahman). The same being appears as many even as there is only one man in an actor who assumes many characters. Though there are many living beings, there is only one God in all of them. Though we speak of Jeevatma and Paramatma separately for the sake of argument, there is in fact only one Atman. If we reach beyond Maya, and obtain this knowledge by experience, we could not remain human beings, with several shortcomings. We would become the complete Truth without any blemish. This is the philosophy of Advaita preached by the Acharya.

If we attain this experience, then nothing like trouble, fear, desire, hatred, etc. will haunt us. Only because we think that there is something else besides us, trouble, fear, desire and hatred arising from us bind us. This is the family bondage. If there is nothing besides us which would bind whom? What is a bond? If There is no such thing as another, how can there be something which is a bond and something bound as separate from us? The state of getting release from bondage is salvation.

We need not go to Vaikuntam or Kailas to attain this stage. We can attain this here and now. In fact we do not attain this salvation as something new. Brahmam which is the truth is always salvation without bondage. There is space every where in the Universe. We have several pots and within the pots the space is always there. We can talk of universal space every where and enclosed space within the pots. But both are the same. If the form of the pot is destroyed both spaces become one. Thus we appear as separate pots of Brahmam because of Maya. Still we are also Brahmam. We do not know this owing to the restriction of Maya. If we break through Maya we will experience that we too are the all-pervading Brahmam.

To reach that experience there are various steps like karma, upasana, etc. The Acharya has arranged these steps to facilitate our reaching that

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experience. Even when we undergo these stages there should always be the awareness that all that we perceive is the same. 'All is one', is an experience that can be reached when it does happen. Still we must cultivate the thought that this is the truth even from now. Sri Adi Sankara Bhagavatpada has said that we must perceive everything as one and the same. But it will be confusing to regard all the separate beings as we.

There are three stages: Jagrat, Swapna and Sushupti in a living being's daily life. The wakeful stage is Jagrat; dreaming is Swapna; and sleeping is Sushupti. There is the same being in all these stages. The one who dreams is the same as who is awake. But there is no connection between the happenings during the dreaming and the wakeful stage. They are different. When the stages are different and the mental activity is different they are experienced by the same being. The being is the same even when the mental stages and the beings are different. We must realise that we are He (the Paramatman).

Sometimes we are peaceful; sometimes we are angry. But we know from experience that in both cases the same man is the subject. During such stages the nature of our face and limbs changes. With the passage of time when the child grows into an old man the body also changes. This is what happens in the wordly life. In the dream state different shapes, different places, different times occur in one's mind. We find that we do things, which we do not think of doing. Thus in these different stages,even if we perform contradictory acts, and even if there is difference in body and mind, we realise that all these stages are experienced by the same being. When we are delirious we do things quite contrary to what we do when we are normal. If we have written a book previously we now tear it to pieces. The one who writes and the one who tears is the same.

This world is also a dream. If we realise that wordly life is the delirium resulting from the fever, Maya, we will understand that in reality all are the same. We will also know that just as many persons are created in dreams, that another person who tears our book we will know that he is we. Because the one who tore and the one who wrote are in different bodies in day-to-day life, the inner being will not be different.

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There is the same thing inside everything. It is a mistake to think that someone else beats us when any one beats us. The truth is we are beating ourselves.

If this is not the truth,there must be something other than a God or Brahmam. If it is so, from where did it come? Of what is it made? Who made it so? These questions arise.

We are knowledgeable and also ignorant. We did not invent the ignorant beings. In the same way, the ignorant did not invent us. An ignorant being cannot create a knowledgeable being. The ignorant being is there from time immemorial existing with difficulty. It must be a great knowledge which has created and is maintaining it.. If that universal knowledge created the universe out of something, the question arises as to where from that something came. So it transpires that the same universal knowledge exhibits itself as the ignorant being. Then we, the living beings-did we arise by ourselves? When we see that every race exists with same qualities and body formation it is evident that it could not have happened by itself. So it is clear that the same universal knowledge has created the entire world. Man's knowledge does not come from anywhere else. It is the work of the universal knowledge.

For the living beings food, clothing and the like have to be obtained from the inanimate gross universe. Smell, taste, cold and heat are in the gross universe. To experience these the Jeevan has senses. In this way the gross universe and the living universe are interrelated. This relationship is not evolved by the living being. Did the living man plan to get food and clothing from the gross universe? Even if he had done, it will not happen. Hence it is clear that the universal knowledge has arranged it that way. If some power has created the gross universe and some other power created the living universe, it is not possible to keep the two inter-related. Hence it is the universal knowledge which is the basis for both the gross and the living universe. We saw that it did not create with something which is outside. Hence, what appears as all these, is the whole truth. So there is only one; but it appears as many. It has the power to appear as many. It is this which is called Maya. The same Brahmam appearing as many through Maya, is Advaita.

We must develop the habit of looking at the universe as one. If all is one, oneself and another cannot be separate. In this way experience will show that even the universe is not being known; that he who knows is

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the same. Now our hand, leg and body seem to be ourselves. Even so the entire world should be thought of as ourselves. If a man attains such knowledge through experience he becomes a scholar even if he is a chandelier. This is expounded in Mannisha Panchakam by the Acharya. This knowledge is the unalterable, blissful salvation. This salvation is capable of being attained even in this birth.

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THIS IS THE SAME AS THAT

A carpenter made an elephant mould (to be used as a vehicle for a deity) for a temple. Another carpenter came to test it. His child also accompanied him. When the father approached the wooden elephant, the child cried. "Don't go near it, father. It will hurt you!" The father consoled the child saying that the wooden animal would not hurt him and took the child near it.

For the child it seemed to be a real elephant. The thought that it was wooden was clouded by the child's thought that it was real. Though it looked like a real elephant, the carpenter had the knowledge that it was made of wood. This concept in both the father and the child is expressed by Tirumular as the elephant concealing the wood and the wood concealing the animal.

Tirumular was a great yogi. He expounded great truths in a simple way. The concept quoted above is in his Tirumandiram. Why did he put it like that? The next two lines in the verse make it clear. "The one that concealed the divine was the Universe which disappeared in the Paramatma. Paramatha and the world are not separate. To illustrate this fact, Tirumular shows that the elephant is not separate from the wood. The toy which is the world was made of the wood known as Paramatha. Just as the child does not see the wood in the toy, we do not see the wood in the world. In our sight the five elements have hidden the divine. To the jnanis all appear as Brahmam. In this case the five elements vanish into the world. We need a comfortable life in the world. For that we need money. Why should we worry about wood and the world?

Let us assume that everyone becomes rich. Will that help people to exist in peace? Look at the wealthy countries! There is so much strife;

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never any peace. If all are rich there would be jealousy, competition and quarrel. It is human nature to desire to have more than another has. Even if facilities are equal to all, each will want that he should be the first to get them. Look at this for instance. All know that I will retire for rest only after blessing everyone with tirtham. Still do the devotees remain in order. With the thought in each one that he should get it first, they jostle each other and quarrel with one another. As long as this competitive spirit is there, there will not be peace of mind. Facilities alone will not reduce competition. If we want to abolish competition, we must obtain the knowledge that there is nothing for which we have to compete. Only then can we live in peace. Self examination is the one task that we should always undertake. If we want to avoid wordly miseries, we should realise that the world is not what we think of; this is all Siva's. That and this are not separate; the wood is elephant; the world is divine. If this knowledge is not had any amount of material comfort will not help the world which is in darkness. We should not relax our effort to obtain the light of knowledge which will dispel the darkness. It does not matter even if the sun disappears. We should not let go the light of knowledge.

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WHY GOD FOR ADVAITIC PEACE

The asthikas believe that there must be a God to maintain this world which is full of difficulties. There is always a reaction to a deed; thus it is God who looks on our deeds and ordains fruits for them. It is the explanation of the asthikas. Alright! why should we show devotion to Him - one might ask. He did not consult us before creating us; by creating us there are only difficulties for us - This can be the argument.

If the asthikas say that He can alleviate difficulties and that is why we should show devotion, others may object to that also. They may even contend that if He would remove our difficulties only if we show devotion, your God is not the ocean of mercy as you claim. You say that He determines the nature of the fruit for an act. In that case, if He punishes us with difficulties for our committing sins, can we pray to Him to alter that? - thus the argument can proceed.

The saint Nilakanta Dikshita, answers this query in his Anandasagarastava : "Mother Meenakshi, we need not tell you anything.

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You are all knowing. Still, unless we express our difficulties to you we feel hurt. Giving expression itself gives us temporary solace. Hence, even though you know everything, I place before you my complaint." This is his explanation.

No one can keep quiet without airing one's grievances. There is peace if one expresses them openly. If we express them to all and sundry we do not know how they would respond. So we can express them to God. If He is the ocean of Grace, we can have peace only if we pray to Him whether we are relieved of our misery without our requesting it or whether He will punish us for our sins as the one who provides the consequence or whether He gives us the power to bear it with difficulties.

But when I refer to devotion to God, I do not mean that it is the prayer to alleviate our miseries. Nor do I mean that it is expression of gratitude for being given happiness. If I say so, some may object and contend, "He who planted the tree must water it; He who created us must give us good life; it is His duty. Why should one be grateful?"

So I stress on bhakti not for all these reasons. Misery and happiness, both affect the mind. True happiness is when the mind is not assailed by anything. No other kind of happiness is permanent. While we sleep and while we stay still in a lifeless manner there is no happiness or misery. But we are not aware whether we are at the time happy and peaceful. The mind should be calm. At the same time we must be aware with the full knowledge that we are peaceful. If we attain that stage there is nothing to match us. Because there is a mind and thoughts arise in it, the thought that we are separate from Paramatma (as Jeevatma), arises, if the mind ceases to be active this confusing sense will disappear. We would be at peace without any disturbance in that state called Advaitic which is nothing else than the Paramatma. Even if we keep our mind still desiring peace the result is the universal Advaitic experience. To attain that stage we should contemplate on something which exists at that stage. If we continue to think of the same thing for a long time, that thought makes us look like that thing itself. This is scientifically accepted. In this a way the only thing that is an ideal example, is God

Though God runs the world by doing all this and maintaining and providing results, God is peaceful without losing interest. Easwara is called "Sthanu". This means a log of wood. The log is full of life, but seems to be senseless. The creeper around the log is Ambal. This

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creeper is called "Aparna". That means "one without foliage". Parasakthi who is full of life but without the ferment of senses - the creeper - is entwined around the Supreme Being who though full of life, seems to be without senses. When we think of God, knowledge and peace prevail in our mind. Hence as we continue to contemplate on God this knowledge and peace fill us in full. That is why I say we need God and that we must show devotion to Him - which is prayer. Whether we seek God for the amelioration of our miseries or for expressing gratitude for our well being, as the habit of thinking about Him gets strengthened, we would be relieved of thinking about misery and happiness. We would also attain the peaceful attitude when we would leave everything to Him for His maintenance as He wishes. A kind of bliss and peacefulness will also pervade the mind. This is what takes us to the divine state. This is the way to attain fulness without any blemish.

Self-enquiry, meditation, Yoga - only with these we can attain fulness by making our minds look like a log of wood. You may ask why I talk of bhakti when these practices are available. The stage of no deed or thought is salvation according to Adi Sankara Bhagavatpada. In that stage even bhakti is not there. You may question my asking you to show bhakti. Even the Acharya has said that among all ways to salvation bhakti is the best.

If you ask me whether I agree with that, you will find that he has given a new definition to bhakti in the next sentence. That is: "By finding out the real state of One's Atma and getting immersed in it is bhakti." This bhakti, as defined by him is the self-examination, meditation, yoga as explained by me just now. Not that there is something which is apart from us. It is the affection that we show to it; that is bhakti.

Still the Acharya who has defined bhakti thus, has himself ordained detailed puja for Chandramauleeswara. Though he has expounded the formless philosophy of the soul, he himself has established the system of worship of deities and so he is called Shamathasthapanacharya. He has worshipped at all shrines and has composed prayer songs on the deities therein. When we think about these things, bhakti as we understand in the worldly way, and the one so elaborately defined by the Acharya are the same.

Knowledge is great, as also self-examination, meditation and yoga. Bhakti, puja, visiting shrines all these are not so great. The multifarious

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rituals and religious rites are also lower than even bhakti. Such an idea also exists. In these days this opinion is very much prevalent among educated people. There is talk everywhere to the effect that religious duties are superstition, bakthi sentimental, and that meditation, self-enquiry and yoga are the only things that have anything to do with the soul.

Though the Acharya, who was steeped in the form of the soul, who founded the jnanamarga illustrating the Advaitic stage to the exclusion of all thought and deed, had recognised bhakti and the performance of orthodox rituals. The reason for his doing so is that in us who are part of this world and whose mind, being always active, refuses to stop even for a moment. Even if we try to stop the activity of the mind and try to be without any thought or deed, it becomes impossible. Thoughts run in all directions. Desires, dislikes, miseries, fears and happiness occur in turn and assail the mind. We also plan to do so many things. Hence, to steep oneself in the soul and stop the mind at a stage are not easily attained.

What is the reason for our inability to make the mind stand still? It is our karma of previous birth. Through the cycle of births, we have committed several sins. As long as those sins are not washed off, attaining the state of eternal bliss would not be possible. Only, after Easwara who provides fruits for our actions absolves us of all sins, can we get permanent happiness? How can one get rid of sin? Only through practising virtues. Easwara grants us another birth so that we can get rid of the sins of the previous births. But what do we do ? Instead of being virtuous in this birth to get relief from the sins of the last birth we continue to commit many sins. The Acharya has made karma and bhakti as parts of knowledge just to enable us to get rid of sins without committing them again.

Sins are of two kinds; one is what we do with our body; the other is by what the mind thinks. To get rid of the act of committing sins we must do virtuous deeds. To get rid of sinful thoughts, we must develop virtuous thinking.

What is a virtuous deed? It is what the Vedas have ordained. Worldly life must be orderly. Acts relating to knowledge, political acts, commercial activity, physical acts - all these must go on without conflict. Only then social life would be orderly. It is for this purpose the society which is founded on the Vedas is divided into four categories based on

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the duties of men with rules and regulations relating to their culture. If all perform their duties without transgressing any of the rules, that would itself be virtuous action. Only when desire for self prompts us to pursue some goal, does duty become sin. Because of the goal we set for ourselves in this way, we are prepared to commit any sin. Thereby hatred, misery, fear and such emotions arise. If we cease to have all these and perform our duties as laid down in the Vedas, greed will not seize us nor competition. The Vedas have divided duties in this way so that all people and the entire world can be orderly. Understanding this, avoiding self-interest, duties performed without looking for fruits, become virtuous deeds and benefit us. They benefit the entire society and also absolve us of our sins. So we get involved in an action only when we perform it without any malice. When the mind is totally involved, there is no place for evil thoughts. That is to say, that virtuous deeds help to cleanse the mind.

Deed and thought are intertwined. If we opt to keep quiet without doing anything, the mind will be assailed by all kinds of evil thoughts. There is an English proverb which says that an 'idle mind is the devil's workshop'. That is why it is necessary that the mind is to be cleansed for its being in the state of Advaita. It is because the mind can be clear only by performance of prescribed duties, the Acharya advocated the Vedic discipline.

It is the virtuous thoughts such as helping others, service and sacrifice which remove sinful thoughts. Bhakti is what directs us towards the Paramatma who is the basis for the immobile and mobile world. At the stage when all evil thoughts are removed, all the sins of previous births dissolve and the mind attaches itself to the Paramatma. By thinking of only one thing we can keep the mind still. If the mind which has been the subject of myriad thoughts, seizes the one and immerses itself in it, the result will be the blissful Atman which remains.

The Bagavatpada gave us the stepping stones of bhakti and karma for our mind to contemplate on the One which is a way of meditation. Prayer, puja, pilgrimage to shrines are forms of bhakti. They make our mind merge with the Paramatma. We begin to experience His real form. Because it is bhakti which guides the conscious mind to the immanent bliss, I plead for showing devotion to the Paramatma.

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There is no use merely repeating the word "Advaita". Only the thought of Easwara who is the personification of the ideal will lead us to the state of Advaita. Instead of expounding the complicated ununderstandable Advaita state, if we regard Easwara as the one without attributes it would provide involvement and ennoble us. It is for this purpose that God is essential. Our Bahkti towards Him is also essential. Hence it is not merely for the removal of misery in worldly life, but also for attaining permanent bliss and peace that we require devotion to Eswara.

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TO REMOVE IGNORANCE

If we look at everything with true knowledge, we would see only happiness. Bliss is eternal. There is no place where it is not prevalent. Knowledge is also eternal and to be found everywhere. So knowledge and Bliss are the same. The Upanishads say that knowledge is Brahmam. Bliss, Knowledge, Brahmam, Atma all are same. Since there is no place where these are non-existent, life also becomes bliss and knowledge.

We see with our eyes only. When we see different flowers we call one 'rose', another 'Oomatham' flower. If we look at the latter with the eye of knowledge, it will not be rose. It will only seem bliss. Oomatham flower will also look so. Since we lack knowledge, we see one as rose and the other as something else. In reality all are bliss. Because there is ignorance in our minds and because there is no co- ordination, the fact does not appear to us. If the mirror is shaky, the image therein will be ugly. If, in addition to its being shaky, the mirror is also dirty, the image will not reflect reality. As the mirror of our mind is shaky and dirty it does no reflect bliss.

If a mad man is asked to hold a stick still for fifteen minutes, he cannot do so. We are able to do it. We are able to hold on to a concrete thing. But we are not able to concentrate on something for a particular duration of time. The mind at one time thinks of a thousand things just as a running film. So just as we think of mad people, the great seers also regard us as mad. Until the mind is controlled, all are mad in a variety of ways. The reason for this is that our mind has blemish and lacks co-ordination. If the blemish is removed there will be co-ordination. Co-ordination will bring out truth.

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How to remove the blemish? The body is the dirt. How did this body come into being? Through sin. How did we commit sin? Through the various parts of the body and the mind. If we want to untie a knot, we have to do it in reversing the way in which the knot was made. In that way we should remedy mistakes through good deeds and remove sins through virtuous acts. The sins committed by the various parts of the body must be removed by those parts themselves. Gifts, charity, performing prescribed religious duties, pronouncing God's name and temple worship are all good deeds. These are the ways to get rid of sins. By removing sins in this way, we should absorb knowledge and attain endless bliss.

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THE PART AND THE WHOLE

There is only one Sun. If we sprinkle some water on a polished surface each drop of water will reflect the Sun. Though we see many images of the Sun, it does not mean that there are so many Suns. There is only one Sun. Likewise, all the bits of knowledge that emanate form all the living beings are the reflections of one and the same Brahman. This is what is expounded by Adi Sankara in his Brahma - Sutra - Bhashyam. The vast energy and the knowledge that form the basis for all things appear to be divided into parts. That is the "Tat" which is at the end of the Vedas. "Tat" means what is at a distance. Though it appears to be far away, in our condition, it is the same which is near as well as far away. Vedas say that it is you. "Tat-tvamasi."

When I say this we seem to understand everything for the moment. If we remain same as we are at this moment, there will be no trouble. But the next moment, we lose the truthful vision. We become the victims of many falsehoods. The happiness that we get through falsehood will also prove false. To be happy always, we must cling to Him who is always true. That being is God. Ordinary mortals like us should cling to Him. We are several parts. When all these parts merge into the whole, it becomes eternal bliss. There is only one who is the whole. The parts are only appearances. Appearance, and dream are not real.

If we contemplate on the undivided whole which is the Paramatma, and on us as parts of the whole and meditate on Him as the ultimate

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Truth, there will be no conflict; there will be complete peace. This is the fruit which Adi Sankara Bagavatpada got for us from the tree of the Upanishads. Before we reach this ripe state we have to pass through the stages of the bud, the blossom, and the unripe fruit. We have to be patient until we become ripe. If we show impatience and try to ripen before time there will be no use. Just as Ramalinga was anxious that we should not fall midway, we should also be cautious. Until we ripen we should perform pujas, tapas and other rituals. They should be observed till we reach the stage of "Tattvam", as indicated at the end of the Vedas. Only then will we be able to know that the basis, that is "Tat-tvam" is within us.

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COMPLETE BLISS

In Krita yuga, Brugu asked his father Varuna, "How to find that which is complete? That should be eternal, must be everywhere; it should be complete without any blemish. Please tell me about such a thing."

Varuna said, "You go and perform tapas; you will know it yourself."

Brugu agreed and began to perform tapas. At first he became aware of one thing - "This body is the best thing. This feels everything. The thing that perceives is better than what is perceived and that is the body" ; He said.

His father told him to do more tapas.

Then Brugu performed tapas for a time and told his father what he felt. Thus it happened five times. At first he felt the body was a complete being. When he knew that the body was perishable he realised that it was not complete. Then he felt that the mind was complete. After that he felt knowledge was the complete thing. At the fifth attempt he realised that the experience of bliss was the complete thing.

Then Brugu told his father, "I am performing tapas all these days. Now, often I feel some kind of happiness at times. What is this?"

"What you feel at times is bliss. This occurs to you in bits. If this is uninterrupted, that is complete bliss. That complete bliss is unlimited by time and space. There is 'Atma' which transcends, body, life, mind and knowledge. It realises itself and the result is bliss", explained his father. This is a story from the Upanishads.

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We are able to experience only a drop from the ocean of bliss. If we sit under a tree full of foliage there is no sunlight. When the breeze separates the branches we see sunlight through the gaps. Then the foliage again hides the sunlight. Likewise happiness occurs to us off and on. Bliss is complete and prevalent all over. But we do not experience it at times because of our bad deeds and the mind and the senses that we have. Sometimes owing to our good deeds a drop of bliss is available to us just as sunlight is seen when the foliage is disturbed by the breeze. If this becomes permanent the bliss becomes complete. We call ourselves happy when we feel enjoying a drop of that ocean. If we perform tapas and seek truth we can merge into the ocean of complete bliss.

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KANNAN TOLD AND KAMBAN ALSO TOLD

The Soul or Atma, is the basis for everything. But to say that it is beyond everything is to give room for doubts. Sri Krishna, in the Gita, says a lot that seems confusing; but really makes everything clear.

He says in the Gita, "I am in all things;all things are within me". If every thing is within Him it means that He is the prime cause for all things. But if He is in all things, it means that they constitute basis. Which is the real one? Confusion is likely to arise in comprehending this.

That God or the soul is the basis for everything is correct. Because He is in everything, it would not mean that He is dependent upon them. It is because of Him that all things get form and life They do not exist without Him. Hence they do not form a basis for him. He is the one who creates and activates everything. Sri Krishna Himself makes this clear: "All living beings are like dolls in a puppet show. It is Easwara who activates them from within". Bhagawan who clears the confusion thus, creates more confusion in the same Gita. The same God who says, "I am in all things; all are in me", also says, "There is nothing with me; I am not in anything". Here, the doctrine of the soul having transcended is being postulated.

If you ask Him why He confuses us like this, He says, "I am not understood by all; that is my Yoga Maya." Does this sound meaningless?

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If we think deeply, we can get clarity from this confusion. If Bhagawan has said "I am not understood by all" it would mean that He cannot be understood by a thousand people if there are so many. But if He says that He cannot be understood by all it my mean that out of a thousand 999 persons may not be able to understand Him. One of them may perhaps comprehend Him. He said "I cannot be understood by all". He did not say "I cannot be understood by anyone". That means some people may be able to comprehend Him.

Who are those few people? They are the jnanis who are not affected by His Yoga Maya. Only these great men can clarify the apparent contradiction in Bhagwan's saying "I am in everything; nothing is with me".

A flower garland is seen in the street, at dusk. A man who happens to pass by treads on it and shouts "Snake!"?, in fear. The same thing appears as a garland and as a snake. When he realises that - it is a garland, he knows that it is not a snake. But what was the basis for his thinking it to be a snake? It was the garland. Just like thinking the garland to be a snake, ignorant beings think of the one Brahman as the many-faced world. The basis for the world is Brahman.

What does it mean when He says "I am in the universe; the universe is within me?" It is like saying that the snake is within the garland; the garland is within the snake. Both are true. To one who shouts "Snake!" the snake has swallowed the garland. In his view the basis is the snake. To one who is rid of ignorance and realises that it is a garland, the garland conceals the snake. To him the garland is the basis.

He who is subject to Maya may see the universe as true. But in reality the basis of the universe is Easwara. For the man who clears the veil of the universe, Easwara appears as all and Himself. During the Nirvikalpa Samadhi of the jnani, nothing but Easwara will appear as the universe. Is it not untrue to say that Easwara is within the universe when there is no such thing as the universe? In the ignorant stage we perceive the body, life, mind and knowledge. When we attain jnana, and feel the happiness of the soul, a stage beyond all this arrives. That is why Sri Krishna said as the ultimate truth, "There is nothing in me; nor am I in anything." Simply because an ignorant person thought of the garland as a snake, we cannot accept that in reality the snake was in the garland.

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Kamban says the same thing in the Sundarakanda of his Ramayana : "It is a false assumption that a snake appears in a garland. Like this, the five elements constituting the false universe gives a false appearance and confuse us. Sri Ramachandramurthy is the Paramatma on whose appearance the false image of the snake dissolves and Easwara the garland alone appears."

Kamban the complete Vaishnava who has sung the Sadagopan-andadi on Nammalwar, describes the appearance of the Paramatma in the Advaitic way.

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WHERE IS BLISS?

We have countless desires. But it is certain that some day we would be separated from those things that we hold dear. Instead of this happening as a result of death, if we give up these desires voluntarily, we will attain bliss. We anchor ourselves to misery in as many ways as there are desires. As desires are reduced, the cause for misery will also diminish. If we forsake all our desires before the present birth comes to an end, we need not be reborn and suffer from all kinds of troubles. We can merge ourselves in the Paramatma and attain bliss.

As men, we pride ourselves upon the fact that we have more knowledge than what the animals have. But what special achievement does a man have? Even the dog, the fox and the cockroach eat. They reproduce and die. It does not appear that man does anything better than they. Then what is there to be proud of about his intelligence? The greatest knowledge is to find the path for permanent bliss. Does man get this permanent bliss?

If we deeply think over this knowledge, this bliss and the 'we' will be found to be the same. When we realise what we are in reality, we would find that we are ourselves the bliss which is full of knowledge.

We do not get happiness from the external world. Bliss is born out of ourselves. Even when we conceal real bliss with our ignorance, we attain bliss as we relate ourselves to something as ours. If that relationship disappears, bliss also disappears. I will give an example. Suppose someone has a plot of land. The yield from that land increases year by year in the beginning. The thought that the land is his, gives him

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joy when the yield increases. When the yield decreases, he sells the land to someone else. If the land gives increased yield now, does the original owner rejoice? He is jealous of the fact that the land gives more yield when it is owned by another person. Only as long as the relationship of owning the land lasts, there is joy in the increased yield. The same field changes the attitude.

Another example, You would have seen that many parents bring their mentally retarded children to me and pray for remedy. One parent behaved in a strange way. He married for the second time. The second wife could not get on well with her step-son. There were conflicts and the family broke-up. The man sided with the second wife and abandoned his son. He came to me one day and said that the son had cast a spell on the second wife through black magic and that it had affected the boy in rebound. When other parents are worried as their sons are affected by mental illness, this men revelled in it! Why? He had lost the relationship with the son. The relationship is now with the second wife. That is why he is happy when she is not affected.

If the 'I' which is subject to Maya is so happy, how much happier must be the 'I' which has no relationship with anything and which is sure knowledge? We know that even the bitter gourd (the vegetable Pavakai-in Tamil) tastes sweet when we add a little jaggery to the curry. When even the addition of jaggery itself tastes sweet, how sweet must be jaggery by itself? Likewise, when the spiritual 'I', lasting soul, can taste sweet by its relationship and give us happiness, the 'I' when it stands apart from all things will taste much sweeter and provide greater happiness. If we cover a burning lamp with a pot full of holes we will see rays of light through the holes. So from the lamp of the soul covered by Maya, we feel some happiness through the senses which serve as holes in the pot. If we break the pot which is Maya, we see the bright flame of bliss. Though the rays which emanate through the holes differ in brightness according to the size of the holes, what is inside is a single flame.. If we break the Maya pot, all the differences that we perceive in the world will disappear and we will see a single flame of bliss.

To break Maya, we must control our desires. As long as the mind is active, desires will arise. That is why the mind should be controlled. We should not think that by controlling the mind we would become inanimate. On the contrary, this is the state which is the basis for all activity. In general, one who is handicapped in some way would be more active in another way. Just as more water will flow in a canal when we regulate

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the flow of water by closing other canals, the loss of one faculty will afford greater activity to another.

By regulating the scattering of the soul-force through the senses and controlling them we can make all activity concentrate at one place in greater bliss. With more power we can render good services to the world.

The power of the saints who have realised their soul-force is an illustration of this. They had the power to travel through the universe and through time and know everything. They listened to the sounds in space which we cannot hear and gave us the Veda Mantras. Those who ask, "How to control desires, how to control the mind and how to attain permanent bliss ?", should act according to the directions of the Vedas. Then they can attain eternal bliss at the end. May Parameswara bless them!

HE WILL WELCOME US

When the sea is calm a breeze causes ripples on its surface. Another breeze causes the ripples to dissolve. The Paramatma is like the still calm ocean. The wind of Maya causes the appearance of the Jeevatmas as ripples. When the grace of the Acharya is bestowed on us it blows like the wind breaking the ripples and we get dissolved and merged into the ocean of the Paramatma.

The capacity of the ocean is constant. The vapour from the sea water is converted into rain which replenishes the river, brook, canal, well and ponds. The ocean never goes dry; nor are there floods in it. The rivers and lakes which come from it may go dry. Or there may be floods in these. In summer there is lack of water supply. We say, that there is no water in the Red-hills lake which supplies drinking water. During the rainy season we speak of freshes in the Godavary and breaches in the Cauvery. But not a drop or grain of water has been lost ever since creation; nor has there been any addition. Rich men would purchase houses by selling lands. By selling the houses they would invest the money in shares. The total wealth would not change. Only the form would change in many ways. Just like that the entire water in the world would be the same in the ocean or in the clouds or in the rivers and in lakes.

The Paramatma manifests Himself in many ways. He is also like the ocean without depletion or replenishment. To us it appears as if there

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is reduction or addition. If we realise that there is only one thing, there is no reduction nor addition.

When we talk of the relationship of the Paramatma and the Jeevatma in terms of water, we must make a special note of the rivers. The water in the sea becomes rain and fills up lakes and ponds and wells. Water in these does not reach the sea. But all rivers flow and merge with the sea. In the north there is a river called Sone. Sonam means red. This river flows through tracts of soil which is red. There is the Krishna in Andhra Paradesh. Krishna means black. This river flows through black soil. Ganga means white. This also derives its name on the basis of the nature of the soil through which it flows. All these rivers fall into the same ocean. Red is Rajas in quality. Black is Tamas and White is Satva. The nature of the Jeevatma depends on the quality through which the flow of the mental process is directed. At the end it has to merge itself into the ocean of the Paramatma.

'Water finds its level', is a common saying. The river rises from the rain falling on the mountains. It runs down the slopes with great speed and sound. It is not so noisy when it flows along the plains. It is then that it finds its level. That is, it becomes calm when it finds its level. In anything peace is found when the level is attained. The sound and fury of things that transcend the level may cause excitement. But the only result will be destroying our own peace.

The ocean receives as if welcoming, the rivers flowing into it without noise or commotion, near their mouths. That is why in the approaches to the confluence the water tastes salty. if we keep to our level and approach the Paramatma with humility, that ocean will meet us half-way and take us into itself.

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MAYA

Buddhism declares that everything is Maya; there is nothing as truth. Advaita does not say so. What Advaita says is: "The universe is of course Maya; but the basis for this is Brahman which is completely true".

It is asked: "You say the world is Maya. When there are so many things happening before our very eyes, how can we say that all these are the creation of Maya?"

The assumption on which such a question is asked is that Maya is something that does not at all exist. It is not so. In the case of saying of the existence of a horn for the rabbit, or of the offspring of a sterile woman, it is meant that it does not exist at all. Maya is not like that. As long as we think it is there, it will appear to be there. It is not like the rabbit's horn. It is like the mirage. We think of water in the mirage. In fact water is not there. We cannot quench our thirst with that seemingly existent water. Even those who are aware of the fact that the water appearing in a mirage is not a fact, are able to see it. Likewise even to those saints who know that the world is Maya, the world appears to exist. But they know that it is not the eternal truth.

We mistake a piece of rope for a snake. The truth is that there is no snake. Still, at the moment when we think of it as a snake, it creates the fear and excitement which a real snake does. Though it is not true that there is a snake it is true that we are affected by the thought of a snake and feel dread. Though the world is not the eternal truth, such things happen when we think of it as true.

When we realise that the rope is only a rope and not a snake; the fear disappears. Like that when we realise that the world is only an appearance, and understand it as part of Brahman, all activities cease.

The world is not completely non-existent. It is an appearance that lasts till knowledge is attained. What we see and experience in a dream appears to be real as long as the dream lasts. Everything disappears when we wake up. Just like that, as long as we are asleep in our ignorance the world appears to be real. When we wake up with knowledge it disappears. The world which is real in a temporary sense but not completely unreal, is termed as 'Pratibhasika satyam', not 'Atyanta Asat'. Just as sunlight shines like silver in a seashell, the world glitters in Brahman for the time being because of Maya.

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For the saint, Maya seems to be just zero. The human being who has not attained knowledge regards himself as a number and adds this zero to it. Just as a zero occurring after a number makes it ten, hundred and thousand, Maya multiplies itself to an ignorant person and appears as a world of multifarious activities.

It is the jnani, who sees a thing as it really is., The same Brahman manifests itself in many aspects, even as several toys are made with the same sugar. If there is a bittergourd made out of sugar, a child will reject it as being bitter in taste. Though it appears as a bitter vegetable, it is in fact made of sweet sugar. The seer knows that all the world is the blissful Brahman. What is bitter to us is sweet to him. What is black to us is white to him. "What is day to us, is night to him." So says Krishna Bhagavan. The light that is Brahman is darkness to us. Maya which is darkness appears as light to us. How is this possible? Maya depending on Brahman gets some light reflected from it. This little light is available to our limited knowledge. The letters in a book would be visible in a little light. If the same book is held against bright sunlight, the letters will not be visible. To us the activities of the world are visible in the limited light of Maya. In the bright soul of the jnani, they disappear. This is the meaning of "what is day to the jnani is the night for us".

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THE INNER AND THE OUTER WORLDS

Why does man always run about endlessly? To fulfill his desires. He desires all external things. So he runs about after them. if he gets one thing he desires for another as he is satiated with the former. Thus he is never at peace.

How can one get peace when one hankers after other things for happiness? What exists outside of us is not ours. It may or may not come to us. It may elude us even as to think that we have got it. It is impracticable to attain eternal happiness from things which are outside of us. It is an effort which disturbs our peace.

The reason for man chasing after happiness in the external world is that he has happiness in himself. Since he is internally happy he is in search of that outside also. He forgets that he is himself happiness incarnate because of Maya. Still as being happy is his nature, he always

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thinks of attaining it. No man goes after grief instead of happiness. Still, instead of experiencing the bliss that is inside, man wanders about in search of that outside, and thus spoils his own peace. If one prays to the Devi, and seeks after one's form through self-enquiry and meditation, one will realise that one is a completely happy self.

If his inner happiness is like an ocean, the happiness he seeks from external things is like a drop of water. If a man realises this he will not go in search of worldly happiness. He will be an ocean of bliss by experiencing his own being. The sea keeps itself within its shores. Bur rivers flow into it. Just like that desires will reach him and dissolve themselves as the rivers merge into the ocean. He will remain as an ocean of great bliss without disturbance as the Gita says. Bhagavatpada himself says that even the status of Devendra is only a drop in the ocean of great bliss within oneself.

Striving endlessly in the belief that we get happiness from status, money, other people, honours and publicity is like hankering after a drop of water, forgetting that we are ourselves the ocean of bliss. It is wrong to think that we lack something because we did not get something from outside. We have no shortcomings. We are complete in ourselves. There is nothing outside of us. All the happiness which is outside is already within us. We should always be clear in our mind in the thought that whatever is outside is only another input of the Paramatma which is inside.

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THE WAY TO LESSEN THE BURDEN OF GRIEF

We should all try to get the true knowledge about the Supreme Being. What is this knowledge? That is that there is nothing except the Supreme Being. That one appears as many. If we dwell on the many appearances, all the troubles resulting from anxiety, and inequality will continue to occur. If we turn our mind from the many appearances and try to comprehend the one that is the cause for all these, our mind will not falter and troubles will cease. Once we accept there is only one, where is the room for anxiety? In that state we can attain eternal bliss. We call this state jnana.

There seems to be comfort in worldly life too. But it does not last long. How can we make permanent the comfort that we get from outside?

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What comes from outside may elude us and get away. In this way, what is comfortable at the moment vanishes at the next moment. Comfort peeps in amidst the travails of the world as the sunlight appears and disappears through the foliage in a tree. Realising the basis of the world is eternal bliss.

In worldly life, many troubles are bound to affect all human beings. Others might think that a rich man has no troubles. Thinking like that they may strive to get rich like him. But if we ask the rich man we will be able to know how much trouble he is subjected to. Suppose we are lying on a pial, if we fall we may get bruised or have a sprain. The rich man is upstairs, in a higher position. If he falls he will suffer from a fracture. Even his life may be endangered. When a man is rich and comfortable, he is more anxious to see that he does not lose his comforts. That is why we do not find any man who says that he is happy. Just as a man thinks that he is very intelligent, honest and handsome he also thinks that he is much miserable.

Grief is born with us. We have already sown the seeds for this as a result of our previous karma. There is no escape from this.

But there is a way to be at peace bearing these troubles which are the result of Karma. Jnana which as already indicated is the way not to increase the burden of misery through new Karma.

If one becomes mentally retarded and inanimate there is no trouble. The troubles of a mad man are not deep-rooted. But there is no eternal bliss when one becomes mad. There is no misery in sleep. But we are not aware of being comfortable while in sleep. Only the jnani who is in his wakeful state is always comfortable. Not that his body is not subject to ills. But his mind is without anxiety. The ills outside do not affect his inner being.

When we lift a pot of water from under the water in a well, we do not feel the weight of the pot. But we feel that it is heavy when it rises above the surface of water. Logs of wood which cannot be lifted easily are conveyed through water. Like that we should immerse all our miseries in jnana which is like water. Even then the cause of misery remains. But it will be light like the pot of water under the surface of water.

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THE YOGI

The yogi is one who is not affected by grief. Sin or blemish in the mind is the cause for grief. If the dirt in the mind is cleansed, it would turn towards the Paramatma of its own accord. Only through discipline and control can the mind be cleansed of its dirt. Before the end of this life, when the soul liberates itself from this body, we should remove all dirt in the mind through proper learning and good practices and by a disciplined life. If we do all this, death will become the Yoga of inseparable union with the Paramatma.

What is the identification of a Yogi? His mind which has reached the Paramatma will not accept anything else.

The mind should not be allowed to go astray beyond that. Only then will the troubles which result from the mind be removed. Where should one go to attain that state? The mind should attach itself to that from which it arose. If the mind reaches its roots it will dissolve itself. Then it will not go astray. That is the state which liberates the mind from all troubles.

There is a river. What is its origin? It is the sea. It is the sea water, converted into vapour that becomes rain and flows as a river. The river flows and ultimately falls into the sea from where it originated. After that it has neither a separate course nor flow. There is something which, like the origin of the river, gathers the mind and absorbs it. Saints and Yogis steeped in a state of samadhi, after dissolving their individual minds and forsaking the awareness of everything outside, merge into this being. Even if it appears to us that the Yogi, after the state of samadhi,has left this being, in reality it is an inseparable merger. In his inner-self there will still be the experience of that Union. That is why even when he appears to be conscious of the outside he does not yearn for anything. If it appears to anyone that he desires something he ceases to be a Yogi. It only means that he has not reached Godhead.

The Yogi can be identified in another way also. That is, if it is true that his mind has allied itself with the Paramatma, not even the greatest misery should assail his mind. If on the other hand the mind is subject to even a little of a trouble, it will mean that he has not got united with the Paramatma.

Even the Yogi may seem to have a lot of misery. That is, it would seem misery to the external world. But he will not feel even an iota of

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misery. He would be like a dry log of wood. Even that comparison is not correct. The log of wood would be insensitive. Yogi is full of awareness. He is always full of bliss without desiring for anything. That is Yoga.

He would be by nature compassionate. He would not show anger or hatred towards others. He would always be conscious that he should not be the cause of hindrance to others. Whatever happens to others, he would never have the egoistic consciousness, "I am doing it". While he has no attachment, he would be fully compassionate. At times if something he does appears harsh to us, it would really be a compassionate act. Parameswars, the great Yogi carries on destruction in this way. To us it would appear cruel. But He destroys so that even the worst sinner may get liberated from his sins and get united with Him.

Just as He affords relief to us from suffering through sleep, he gives us some respite after this life ends. Just as we wake up after sleep, every morning and engage ourselves in activities, good and bad, after some respite, after death, one wakes up with another body. This constant birth and death should be avoided. Once we forsake this body, we should not be born in another body. We must ensure this. It is for that there are control, discipline, compassion, tapas, puja, yagyam and daanam. We should get ourselves trained in these from childhood. Only by such training and by uplifting millions of people, step by a step, a Yogi or jnani evolves himself. That is the goal of all created mankind.

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AMELIORATION OF MISERY

If a man falls ill many people suggest several reasons for the same. The Ayurvedic physician will say that the man's pulse is not regular. Allopathic doctors will say something else. Psychiatrists who are famous now-a-days will attribute psychological reasons. The spiritualist healer will point to some lapse in religious practice. The astrologer will explain that it is due to planetary positions. Those well versed in Dharma sastras will say that the illness is the result of karma.

Not only for illness, but for all the troubles in life such a variety of reasons is advanced. So many reasons for happenings confuse us. Is the planetary position alone the cause of our ills? Should we propitiate the planets? Or is it due to our lack of devotion to our family deity or village deity? Should we make offerings to that deity? For physical illness we have also to undergo medical treatment. If it is all due to Karma, should we keep quiet until the illness runs its course? There is thus much of confusion.

If we look into the causes all would seem valid. The original cause is our Karma which alone is certain. That Karma results in many happenings. Rain is a single natural phenomenon. But it results in many things. The earth becomes wet; there arise insects and frogs. Some plants flourish; some rot in the dampness. All these result from the same rain. Likewise, on the basis of spiritual, astrological and medical treatment, the cause for our illness is Karma. There are many more problems resulting from wealth, power, physical condition and knowledge. The cause for all these problems is also Karma. According to science, if there is an effect, there should be a cause.

The entire universe is subject to cause and effect and action and reaction. Physics explains this truth. As the inanimate and animal world arise from the same root, what is applicable to the inanimate world is equally applicable to humans also. The cause for all the ills and comforts which affect us in this birth is our own action in this and in the previous births. Sometimes it is said that the good and bad deeds of others also affect our own deeds. For example, if the child is ill, they say that is due to the Karma of the parents. This appears logical when we consider how they look after the child and are miserable on account of the child's suffering. It occurs to me that any harm that affects us is due to the good deeds of our enemy.

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There is only one Parasakti who is the cause of all activities in the universe. The whole world moves according to the command of the One Supreme Being. He establishes connection between all things. Nothing happens in this world without one being related to another. God relates all those which we think are isolated.

One's Karma and its effects form the basis of human life. The planetary effects, lapse in bhakti and illness are more or less auxiliary to that.

We can seek remedy either on the basis of our horoscopes, or by medical treatment or through propitiating the spirits. When our Karma is completed, there would be cure. Better than all these would be to dedicate everything to God and achieve the power to await His decision. That would be the real and absolute remedy.

Whatever the results of the Karma in the previous birth, it is important to ensure that the burden of future Karma does not increase. It is better to seek God's help to avoid committing sins afresh than to seek remedy from past sins.

Meditating upon Easwara for the miseries resulting from previous Karma is the only remedy. It is also the sure way of avoiding the sowing of new miseries.. The ultimate remedy for miseries is the achievement of Advaita experience that there is no separate thing which causes grief as there is neither happiness nor misery in that state. What is common as basis of both is the self-luminous truth.

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DVAITAM - BUDDHISM - ADVAITA

"Brahmam is complete. The world is also complete. The fullness of the world is born in the fulness of Brahmam. Even if the complete world is taken out of the fulness that is Brahmam, Brahmam continues to be complete". This is what an Upanishad mantra says. Complete means all. How can two things be all? The question arises that how can fulness remain when it is taken out of fullness.

What is the real import of this mantra? The world is not something separated from the Brahmam. It is Brahmam which appears as the world. Brahmam has not created the world with some other material. Nor has Brahmam transformed itself into the world. Brahmam has the appearance of the world. That is all. In darkness we see a garland and think it to be a snake. The garland did not change into a snake. Nor did the garland create the snake. When we thought of it as snake, it looked completely as a snake.. When we realise it to be a garland, it is fully a garland. In the completeness of Brahmam, the fullness of the world appears just like the complete snake appearing in the complete garland That is, at one stage the garland is the complete. At another stage the snake is complete. One complete whole appears as two different ones at two stages. The garland did not gain in weight when it appeared as a snake Nor did it lose weight when the snake disappeared and the garland appeared. Likewise it does not change, but remains complete. Kamban says that the world is like the false snake that appears in the garland. Even when the idea of the snake is separated from the garland, it remains the complete garland. This is what the Upanishad mantra means when it says that fulness remains even when fullness is removed from the whole.

Why did the garland appear as the snake? It is because of the darkness. So because of illusion - Maya-the Brahmam appears as the world. Maya means that which is not. It is the non-existent Maya that makes the whole Brahmam appear as many. You may ask whether it is possible for something to do this. I will answer with the basis of mathematics.

In the case of Brahmam we saw the principles of addition and subtraction. We also noted the strange fact that addition does not increase; subtraction does not reduce. Now we shall take up multiplication and division.

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We divide a number by another. As the divisor becomes smaller the quotient increases. If sixteen is divided, by sixteen the quotient is one. If divided by eight, the quotient is two. If divided by one the quotient is sixteen. If the dividing number is small, the quotient is large. If the divisor is very minute like zero, then the quotient becomes infinity.. If we divide any number by zero, the quotient is infinity.

1/0 is infinity. 2/0 is infinity. 3/0 is also infinity.

If a crore is divided by zero, then also the quotient is infinity.

It is a mathematical rule that if the quotient is multiplied by the divisor, the number divided would be the result. 16-2 = 8; that is 8 x 2 = 16. Accordingly, infinity x 0 = 2; infinity x 0 = 1 infinity x 0 = 3.

This one infinity is Brahmam. Maya which is = not; is zero. What is not is cipher. The word Maya means that which is not. Hence Maya is cipher, i. e. zero. Brahmam shows itself as the multifaceted world through the power of Maya just as infinity shows itself as many by multiplying itself by zero.. We can give any number to the world that is being divided. It will not change because what divides it is Maya, the zero. The infinity which is Brahmam is the quotient. Since the universe can in this way be any number without limitation, that also becomes infinity. Creation is varied being in many ways. Our mind also acts in many ways. There is no end to this. There is only infinity. When we say that Brahmam is the whole, from the Upanishad mantra we can understand that is a changeless infinity and that when we say the Universe is the whole it is infinity in its constant change.

Advaita says that Brahmam which is infinity is the only truth. Dvaita says that the universe which appears as infinity is also the truth. Buddhism says that there is no difference between Brahmam and the Universe and that all is empty, zero,Maya. That is Advaita holds that Brahmam is truth. Dvaitam says that the Universe is the truth.

Buddhism holds that everything is Maya, The equation - Brahmam x Maya = the Universe, that was postulated earlier, can also be stated thus :- Advaita x Buddhism = Dvaita, or Dvaita - Budddhism = Advaita.

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THE ACHARYA'S COMMAND

The important command issued to us who are presiding over the peethams established after Adi Sankara's name is that we should meditate upon Easwara all the time. and also that we should make others also do the same. Why should we meditate upon God? Has not that Easwara become all of us. The goal is to realise that our real form is Easwara. How can we identify our real identity ? If we do not know, it is enough to meditate upon Easwara who is the repository of all that is divine. Since He and we are the same, He will bless us with his real form. When we and He become one all attributes disappear and Nirguna remains.

We send our children to school. If they do not improve in studies, we blame the teacher. In the same way, it would mean that if you do not improve, I, (your guru) am of no use. When one's duty is to give proper guidance to another and if the other commits a mistake, the blame would accrue to the one who is the guide. "The sins the subjects commit would accrue to the ruler. The wife's mistake would affect the husband" -says the Niti sastra. Ordinarily each guru has some disciples. Their sins will accrue to the guru. If one is Jagadguru, how much sin would he have to shoulder? All the sins in the world would fall on him.

The only way to get rid of sins is to meditate on God. That is why Bhagavatpada commanded "Involve people in prayer; If they don't pray, you pray for them too". I am doing my best to discharge that duty. I am trying to pray for all of you. If you also pray as much as you can, to that extent, my burden will be less.

All should undertake to meditation to avoid committing new sins, to bear with the results of previous Karma and to keep the mind clean. If there is determination, there would be time to meditate. If we avoid gossip and give up discussing news there would be enough leisure for meditation which will bring divine grace. We should consider meditation as our prime duty in life whether we are rich or poor, comfortable or miserable, well or ill. We should meditate upon God as long as we can.

In addition to our meditating we should make our friends also meditate. We should not be annoyed if they do not. We should advise them kindly. If we speak with kindness anyone will accede to our request.

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I told you about Bhagavatpada commanding us to meditate and to ask others also to meditate. Whether I succeed in making you meditate or not, I would have done my duty by asking you to meditate, as per the command of the Great Acharya. The fortune of telling you to mediate has been gained by me. You have the fortune of listening to me. I think that I have discharged at least a part of my duty by repeating the Bhagavatpada's commands. You should listen to me for the welfare of yourselves. Both you and I would be mutually benefitted.

Obtain the benefit in full measure by taking this to your heart. May Parameswara bestow His abundant grace on us so that we would have the determination and satisfaction of realising that we have got the benefit of this birth and that we have no fear in reaching our goal.

We have committed so many sins because our minds had been spoilt. If we had mediated upon God even from our childhood, we would have been rid of many sins. Now we are committing more sins. To the extent of our mediating upon Him, we get the benefit of birth. That is the result of taking this human birth.

We should ask ourselves for how long we should meditate. We do so many things daily. But we meditate only for a short time. Had we but spent such time in meditation as the time wasted in gossip, we need not be afraid of the burden of sin. Now the burden keeps on increasing. We have come into this world. Whoever it is, he has to die. Till now this world has served only to increase dirt. Still let us make this world the place to wash off our dirt. Facilities like, body, mind, sastras, shrines and holy water spots exist only in this world. We have committed sins through speech, thought and our limbs. By doing virtuous deeds through these very means we should wash off those sins. If we rid ourselves of the burden of sin we can fly away like cotton. We can reach the place from where we have come. After that it would be permanent bliss. There is a saying in Kannada which describes our Acharya as one who makes even sinners the Paramatma. To attain that stage when we deem even a 'duratma' - (a sinning bad person) as none else than the Parmatma, the Acharya has provided us with stepping stones. This process begins in Karma, passes through bhakti and reaches the goal of jnana.

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THE DIVINE VOICE - PART II.

DISCOURSES OF HIS HOLINESS SRI. CHANDRASEKARENDRA SARASVATI PARAMACHARYA OF SRI. KANCHI KAMAKOTI PEETHAM

Translated by P.G. Sundararajan

from the Tamil Compilation

DEIVATTIN KURAL By. Ra. Ganapati.

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DHARMA THE SAVIOUR.

As a pointer to the birth of a new year, Nature makes the Neem and Pipal trees shed their leaves completely then she makes them grow again.

According to tradition, the Neem is married to the Arasu tree and the Deities Vinayaka and Nagaraja are consecrated under them. In autumn, after winter the trees will have no foliage Vinayaka and Nagaraja the Serpent God will remain there with the sunlight falling on them. The weather will also be warm when the sunlight falling is enjoyable. We need umbrellas when it rains and when the sun is hot in mid-winter it is not possible to sit in the open at night. In the autumn weather when it is not very cold, it is comfortable to sit in the open during day and night. The cold season ends with Sivarathri. As if to illustrate this, nature showers the leaves of the Neem and Arasu trees on Vinayaka and Nagaraja. Nagaraja can also be called Subrahmanya. Telugus call Subrahmanya and the snake as "Subbarayulu". the custom of worshipping Nagaraja on the sixth day of the lunar fortnight has been in vogue in Tamilnadu from time immemorial. The affection shown by Nature towards children of the first couple is like grace bestowed on all of us by Parvati and Parameswara as we are their children.

It is grace in its fullness. Though they are made to sit in the open in the temperate climate, when the sun grows hotter with the advent of spring, nature sees to it that they are not uncomfortable. As the weather becomes warmer, the leaves sprout and serve as a green umbrella. Sprouting is natural; it is the law of nature. This happens all the time without any change.

There are laws which govern the happenings in the Universe only when they conform to that pattern can lie in he world go on. Otherwise all will go awry. It is due to the considerate feeling that all life should go on without any hitch that Eswara has ordained certain laws by which life in the world would continue by the interaction of natural phenomena. Because He knows that His children need mild sunlight and that they should be provided with that for their growth, Eswara directs nature by laying down laws and duties for the trees.

We should deserve this love. We are subject to the same law that governs the tree and the branches Only when we demonstrate this for

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the benefit of the world can we claim this love. The law that applies to human beings is called Dharma. God also plays with man by giving him brain by which he can circumvent he law. With this brain man hankers after many things thinking that they provide him with comfort.

In this he exceeds his limitation of his dharma. But it is only dharma which provides comfort.

Something has been all along guiding human beings towards this dharma. Because of this men all the world over indulge in strange acts without being satisfied with meeting his physical needs. One preaches the Bible with the help of the Cross. Another does Namas still another adorns himself with Vibhuthi. Yet another wears Thiruuman on his forehead. Though no direct physical benefit is derived from these acts, mankind has been following these practices for many generations. Why so?

Man accumulated wealth for his worldly life. Feeling that it would not be enough he began to earn for the future also. How many years does the future mean. It was clear that it would not be for thousands of years. Man went after wealth that would suffice for his lifetime and also for his descendants.

The question arose as to what happens when his lifetime is over. Saints discovered that with the death of the body, man does not cease to exist. They also found that the wealth earned for this body does not benefit the man when that body is no more. They found out what was required to be done to attain peace after the body ceased to exist. In many countries, they found different ways. The Cross,the Namaz, the Vibhuthi and the Thiruman all came into being in this way.

"The dharma of man is to regard the entire world as God's and act accordingly."

All acts that he undertakes for his own sake will push him towards adharma. Hence man should lessen his self- interest. He must be made aware of Easwara and he must also realise that the world is Easwara's. On this basis all religions have come into being.

There is no religion which says, "Act according to your desires and amass wealth for yourself".Since man will act out of self-interest as long as he thinks himself as important, all religions teach him about God adding,"You are nothing before the great power which has created the

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universe", to reduce his egoism. If we are able to get hold of that great power it will direct our brains towards the required direction and involve us in our dharma. That is why most of the religions lay stress on bhakti.

Still, it is not possible to stand by the doctrine that we should have bhakti towards God. Ordinary people can show bhakti in the form of action. It is for this reason that every religion has rituals; Sandhyavandanam, Prayer, Namaz and the like. When man is able to show bhakti while engaged in worldly life, religions tell him how he is to uphold his dharma. All religions enjoin. "Be kind to all, offer sacrifice, save others." If man lives in this way, when the body is no more, his soul will unite with God. One concept holds that this is becoming God Himself in the Advaitic way. Another holds that it is by reaching Him and by serving Him,we obtain His grace and be blissful. We need not quarrel over that ultimate stage now. It is enough if we know for the present that We reach Godhead in some way". There will be no such thing as misery, difficulty, failures etc. which are likely in worldly life. There is only complete, eternal bliss.

For the Paramatma to take us unto Him, we should perform our duties to the world and to Him without any discrepancy. These duties constitute our Dharma. That is, what results in good while the body is there and while it is not. That is Dharma. When the body ceases to exist, there are no limbs. Even while the body exists we should perform dharmic acts which would lead us to salvation, when the body dies. This is more important than insuring our lives for the benefit of others. The permanent insurance for our good in the world hereafter is our following of Dharma. We talk of life insurance. Dharma is the insurance for the life. That will result in good. Even during this life that dharma provides peace and comfort.

There need be no confusion as to what dharma we should adopt. We are set in the dharma which has been followed by our ancestors, traditionally, down the ages. By experience they have attained eternal bliss. It is certain that they lived in complete peace without the agitations and demonstrations which beset our generation. So it is enough if we follow that dharma. It would be a wasteful exercise if we hold on to something new, invented by us. We would be assailed by endless doubts as to whether the new practice would result in good or bad. Hence it is better to hold on to the dharma which was meant for us and which our ancestors followed. Human life is full of difficulties. It is inevitable there

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would be risks. It is to realise this that in the new year we consume the neem flower. Thus we begin the year with bitter taste consuming a thing which is of bitter taste. By about the end of the year, we consume sweet sugarcane during the Pongal festival. If it is sweet even at the beginning it may turn bitter in the end. We need not reject what is sour. Let us accept what is bitter as being the medicine provided by Mother Nature. By doing so we would be able to think of any experience as being sweet.

Sri Rama experienced great difficulties during his exile. Like the mother who packs some edibles for the child who goes on a tour, Kausalya thought of something that would not be spoilt for fourteen years.

Then she decided to pack dharma as a permanent edible. She said, "Raghava, the dharma which you maintain with regularity will itself protect you" and commended dharma to him.

It was dharma which brought victory to Rama in the end. If one sticks to one's dharma even animals will help him. Adharma will make even a brother become an enemy. This truth is demonstrated by the Ramayana. Rama was helped by the monkeys. Ravana was deserted by his own brother Vibhishana.

Dharma is the saviour. It is because of that the ten-headed Ravana was destroyed and Rama stood with his head held high in victory. To each,the dharma followed by his ancestors becomes religion. Let everyone follow the dharma prescribed for him with courage and regularity and attain permanent bliss.

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SIN AND VIRTUE

In this world none of us wants to be a sinner. But we commit many sins. All of us want to get the benefit of virtuous deeds; but we do not perform virtuous deeds.

Arjuna asks Bhagawan; 'No one wants to commit sin; but something instigates man to commit sin. What is that?"

"That is desire, desire," says Bhagawan.

We try to get something because we desire it. Since we want to get it any how, we reject our morals. If the desire is accomplished, is there satisfaction? No. Does the fire go out if ghee is poured into it? No. It only burns more. Likewise once a certain desire is fulfilled, another takes its place with more intensity.

Because of this, can we say that it is good if desire is not fulfilled? It is not so either. If a desire is not fulfilled there is frustration and anger. Like a ball that rebounds when flung against a wall, the unfulfilled desire returns with anger and pushes man into sin. Bhagawan talked about this hostility as being next to desire, in the Gita. This is also the result of desire.

So the only way to desist from committing sin is to eschew desire. How can we do this? We cannot remain without doing anything. Even when the body is at rest, the mind is active. The mind is always thinking about something. Whatever we do with our body and the mind, revolves round our own desires By this they go on pushing us deeper and deeper into sin. If we choose to do nothing, human nature does not allow us to be so.

Saint Tayumanavar said: "It is a rare quality to remain inactive by controlling the mind. Even if the activity of the body is reduced a little, the mental activity refuses to be quiet. The mind, in addition to thinking eggs on the body into action".

We are not able to control desire. If we are unable to control our actions too, there is no salvation for us. Is there no solution to this problem? There is. In our present state it is not necessary to stop activity altogether.. But we should cease to do anything to satisfy our desires and involve ourselves in action that does not result in physical profit. We

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should undertake such action which would be for the common good and which would result in spiritual benefit. When we cultivate a taste for such action and involve ourselves in it more deeply, our desires would also diminish. Virtue will increase. What we should do now is to practice activities which are devoid of desire. Acting without desire is a virtue.

We commit sins in four ways. With body we commit bad deeds. By speech we indulge in gossip and untruth. The mind gets into evil thoughts. And with money we commit many sins. We should try to do virtuous things in the same fourfold ways in which we commit sins.

We should become virtuous by making the body serve others and by circumambulating the deity in any temple and worshipping It. Through our speech we should chant the name of God. You might say that there is hardly any leisure for these as all the time is spent in earning a livelihood. Earning is of course necessary for a householder. But if you think about it, you will find that not all your time is spent for that purpose. How much time do we spend in idle talk, mocking at others, watching fun and commenting on the news of the day. We can spend this time in such ways, as meditating upon God. It does not matter if we cannot find time for this separately. When we travel in a train we can chant the name of God. The wealth you earn by running about all the time is not going to accompany you at the end. God's name is the only legal tender in the other world.

The mind is God's abode. We have made it a dustbin. We should cleanse it, consecrate God in it and thereby find peace. We should meditate like this at least for five minutes daily. This should be done at any cost. When the worldly life ends it is meditation which will help us. We should add to virtuous actions by spending money for adoring God and helping the poor people in a spirit of charity.

Sin has dual powers. One is leading us astray. The other is making us repeat mistakes. For instance using snuff is bad for once. But sin persuades us into using it a second time. This is called bad habit. By giving up bad habits and repeated virtuous, thoughts, we can become virtuous.

Habit drags us into sin repeatedly. But that need not deter us.

Sinners like us and worse sinners have become bhaktas and saints. How can God be great if He does not redeem sinners? He is called

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"Patita Pavana ", protector of sinners. It is we who give Him that greatness.

Sri Krishna offers protection to us by saying "Surrender unto me. I will redeem you from all sins." So let us be confident. We must try to unwind ourselves in the reverse way by which we wound ourselves. To get rid of bad habits there must be enough virtuous action. There should be no haste or impatience meanwhile. If these exist, there will be complications. If we trust in God with patience and discharge our duties, He would surely come to our rescue.

Many religions have arisen to direct our mind, speech and action away form sensory affairs and direct us towards God. It is to redeem man from the actions he indulges in sensory comfort that prophets have appeared and founded religions. The pleasure one gets through sensuous comfort is momentary. The ideal of each religion is to liberate man from samsara (worldly existence) and help him to reach Godhead by saying, "Eternal bliss is being one with the Paramatma

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THE USES OF RELIGION

Religion is the vehicle for dharma, artha, kama and moksha - the four-fold aspects of life. These four are called 'Purushartas'.

'Dharma' is known as 'Aram' in Tamil. 'Artha' is 'Porul'. Kama and moksha are known as 'inbam' and 'veedu'. In the word 'Purushartha', there is the term 'artha'.. In the four aspects mentioned above there is 'artha' after 'dharma'. 'Artha' means thinking of something as desired. Purusharthas are those which men think of as wants. What does a man want? Since in an imperfect stage we want money and things, it means, 'artha'. We call economics as 'Arthasastra'. But our Acharya has declared in 'Bhaja Govindam' that this 'artha' is a great nuisance. He has said this because this artha or material thing gives us only ephemeral happiness and deprives us of permanent bliss.

In fact man wants to be always happy without any want. Happiness is of two kinds. One is temporary. The other is endless. What brings temporary happiness is pleasure or 'kama'. Kama denotes all kinds of

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worldly desires. The kind of happiness that remains forever is the one known as 'moksha' or salvation.

Because men do not know the greatness of eternal bliss, they hanker after temporary pleasures.

So what we must desire for is the fourth Purushartha known as Moksha. In day-to-day life what is wanted is pleasure, the third aspect. One is happy when he partakes of a feast. That is pleasure. If one becomes the justice of a High Court, that is also a kind of pleasure. Receiving welcome addresses is also a sort of pleasure. These pleasures are momentary. We get pleasures through wealth which may be of kind or of money, or of house, or of persons. Wealth is the basis for pleasure. We enjoy this pleasure for a short period of time. Then the search for further pleasure overtakes us.

The everlasting great happiness which makes one not to feel the want of anything more, is moksha or salvation. That is what is known as 'veedu' in Tamil. One who is in prison goes home when released. Home [Veedu] in Tamil means liberation. We are now prisoners of flesh. We think we are this body. That is not correct. The body is the prison that we are in. Our real home is salvation which is eternal bliss. We should leave this prison and be in our own real home. God has imprisoned us in the body as punishment for our past sinful actions. If our deeds are virtuous, He will condone our crimes and reduce our sentence and release us. We should not enhance our period of prison life by committing more sins while in prison. We should endeavor to reach Godhead which is the real home. That home is the abode of endless happiness, the happiness that is not lacking in matter of time, place and things.

I shall now take the first of the Purusharthas, that is dharma. In Tamil we are first told, "Desire to perform dharma or aram".

Though dharma generally means doing good, the word is construed as equivalent to 'giving', Beggars implore us to perform dharma. We usually say 'daana-dharma'. In Tamil philanthropic institutions are termed as 'arakattalai'. In this way it is dharma to give material things to others in need. How can we get the things which we can give like this? Only if we had given things to others in our previous birth, that action would result in our having enough to give away in this birth. Material is the purpose of dharma. Just as wealth is the cause of

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pleasure, dharma is the cause of wealth. Giving away is not the only purpose.

The dirt in our minds will be removed and we will get permanent happiness if we dedicate ourselves to doing dharma with the thought "I do not want wealth; let Easwara bestow what He thinks fit." The dharma which gives wealth will itself become the cause of attaining salvation. Through this it also becomes the cause of pleasure and salvation when it is done without desiring for results. If we give by way of charity we get material in return. With that material we can repeat the charitable act.. Now it is wealth itself which is the cause of charity. Pleasure alone never gets fulfilled nor is it the cause of other things Like the water poured on hot sand, pleasure exhausts itself, and failing to last, ceases to be the cause of other actions and destroys the charitable instinct, wealth and salvation. Still it is not possible to give up all pleasures instantaneously. Religion is there to help us in getting free of pleasures gradually and to lead us to the great everlasting happiness, i.e. 'Moksha'

Explaining what is dharma at first and showing the way to earn wealth in the right way to discharge that dharma and training us in rigorous discipline till we get perfection in meeting the particular pleasures and finally destroying the minor pleasures and showing us the permanent happiness of salvation-constitute the purpose of religion.

Salvation is the state at which the soul freed from bonds, is full of happiness. Religion is meant to make this state available to us.

It is certain that men have not attained permanent happiness. All religions seek to help men to attain that happiness, the eternal bliss. Permanent happiness will result only if we forsake chasing ephemeral pleasures obtained through the senses. Certain codes of conduct are necessary to rid ourselves of the sensory comforts and to constitute our social life to help us to get permanent happiness. Religion which has deliverance as the ideal lays down the rules of dharma. That is what great men meant whenever dharma was spoken of.

We men who have become so owing to the power of Maya - illusion want only wealth and minor pleasures..Artha (wealth) is that which we want to get. Though in reality, wealth and pleasure are not necessary for a good life,great men have added these to the Purusharthas considering human nature. If we cultivate dharma even from the beginning as a basic instinct , then , even wealth and pleasure cannot spoil us. Dharma was

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mentioned as the first Purushartha because it would keep under control wealth and pleasure. Even as we desire for wealth and pleasure,we must also yearn for dharma. Then it will divest wealth and pleasure of their poison. Ultimately it will lead us to salvation for which also we should yearn.

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MAN AND ANIMAL

Animals grow horizontally. They are called 'tiryak'. Man, who, unlike the beast grows vertically, should have noble aims. Only then can he get more comforts than animals. But in day-to-day life we are more miserable than the animals. The animals do not have so much lust, worry, grief and disgrace as we do have. Above all they do not commit many sins. Only we commit a lot of sins and experience misery.

It would seem that God has not provided us the comforts that He has bestowed on animals. If anyone beats us, we do not have a weapon to attack him. For the bull God has given the horns. It butts with them. The tiger has claws. We have neither horns nor claws.. The sheep has wool to protect it from cold. Other animals also have such protection. Only man is defenceless. He cannot retaliate if one attacks him. Nor can he run fast. Though the horse has no horn it can run fast. We cannot.

But God has given man the brain. If he wants to protect himself from the cold he takes the wool from animals and weaves a blanket. If he wants to move fast, he fits in a horse to a cart and uses it. Though he has no natural physical weapons as animals have, he manufactures many kinds of weapons. Thus with his brain power he rules over the animals and the inanimate world.

Animals live in various regions.. The bear of the cold region cannot live in hot regions. The elephant which lives here cannot live in the cold region. But man lives all over the world. God has allowed him to live anywhere by using his brain and by creating a congenial atmosphere.

But even with such a brain man is not happy. The difficulty is that he is born. What should he do so that he would not be reborn? What is the reason for birth? We have committed some mistakes and as

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punishment for the same we undergo flogging according to law. We receive the lashes with this body. If this body dies another body appears and it will receive the remaining lashes. Because we commit sin through desire there is rebirth. If we do nothing there will be no birth. We commit sins out of anger. Desire and lust cause anger. So we must get rid of desire.

It would not be possible to keep away from committing anything after we have developed attachment. If we abandon attachment we would not commit sins.

What is the cause of desire? Because we think that there is something else besides ourselves, desire arises. In reality the same Siva who is Shakti is all and there is nothing besides that.

A bull sees its image in a mirror and attacks the image thinking it to be another bull. A man sees his reflection. Does he think it is another man? He knows both are the same. Thus, whatever we see is the same. If you think of another, desire will arise. Because of desire there will be anger. In anger we commit sins. That results in rebirth. If we attain this knowledge that all is one and the same, there will be no desire, no sin, no birth, and no misery.

How to attain this knowledge? Our mother who bore us would feed us with milk. Ambal (the Divine Mother) is the only one who can feed us with the milk of knowledge. She is the embodiment of knowledge. If we hold fast to Her holy feet and merge ourselves into Her form knowledge will result. Man becomes like God at that moment.

Firstly, we must be a human and not an animal. Then we should be elevated to be one with God. This is the aim of all religions. Though there may be difference in ideology and philosophy among the many religions, all religions speak with one voice that man should be ennobled and be made to acquire the attributes of love, humility, peace and self-sacrifice.

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BHAKTI- (DEVOTION)- COMMON TO ALL RELIGIONS

All religious practices have come into being to liberate man from anxieties and uplift him. All religions also say that man not only has worries which animals do not have,and that he would be free from his worries if he tries and attains true knowledge which other animals cannot attain. They confirm with one voice that by surrendering oneself to the Supreme Power one can be liberated from worries. Advaita, Visishtadvaita, Dvaitam,Saiva- siddhantha, Christianity, Islam-whatever be the-faith-all have bhakti (devotion) in common.

Though Buddha did no preach bhakti, Buddhists are not able to get on without bhakti. That is why they have made Buddha a God and offer worship huge idols of Buddha. Even in recent times, saints are stressing on self-enquiry. But those who respond to the teachings of these saints deify them and worship them.. Bhakti is something that is inborn.

When we practice, devotion in the Advaitic way, we should think that God is in us without making any distinction between us and God. The bhakta who knows very little, shows devotion to Bhagawan, the Supreme Being. How can both be the Same? If there are others, whence did they come? How can He control what has come form outside? If we speculate in this way, we will realise that the same Paramatma is Easwara, the ocean, the animals, the lake, the pond, and the well and also the drop of water in a spoon. Fundamentally all are the same. If we attain that base, we would become It itself. This is the Advaitic concept of salvation.

There is no use in talking like this intellectually. This must be the result of experience. It will be possible only if there is God's grace. Great men have said that we would attain the Advaitic base only when we have the grace of the power which controls all.

Even in the initial stages when we see Bhagawan and Bhakta separately, we should convince ourselves that the Paramatma is itself the Bhakta. By such confirmed thought we would be more devoted towards God, since there is nothing which we deem dearer than ourselves.

Easwara who deals out results for all our actions, continues to bestow His grace on us as we continue in devotion, so that we would get nearer

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to Him in course of time. He will himself reveal what He is and What He is capable of. We need not try to analyse Him. He would Himself respond to our bhakti, and reveal Himself unto us. Bhagawan has said this in the Gita.

When devotees become aware of the many divine qualities of Easwara, they go on admiring them. But the Jnani, attaining the attribute-less stage, through God's grace, merges himself into Him. For this Saguna Upasana-worship of forms of God is the beginning.

It is from this Saguna Upasana or murti-worship, our religion speaks of a personal God, Ishta Devata. Other religions stop with mentioning the concept of God. Our Sanatana Dharma (the Hindu religion), provides us with the various divine forms of the One God so that each can worship Him in his own way with devotion. These forms are not merely imaginary. God who is only one has appeared to saints in these forms. The saints have adopted the forms best known to them and shown devotion to them. They have also prescribed ways and means of following the kind of upasana and mantras to attain darshan of a particular deity.

However different the way of worship may be the offering of bhakti is common to all. Bhakti serves the purpose.

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THE UNITY OF RELIGIONS

All religions are meant for worship of God. All faiths hold that God is one. God who is only one will accept devotion in whichever way it is offered. Hence there is no one need to leave the religion in which he is born, and go to any other religion for solace.

The temple, the church, the mosque and the vihara may differ in structure. The deity or the symbol inside may also be different. The rituals may also differ. But the Supreme Being who bestows grace is the same. Different religions have arisen depending on the culture of each country and its people. All these religions show the way to reach Godhead through worship according to their imagination. Hence no one need get converted to another religion from his own faith. Those who leave their own religion for another, not only denigrate their own religion,

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but also the one to which they get converted. They also denigrate God. You may think that they go to another religion because they find some drawback in their own religion and wonder why I say that they denigrate the religion to which they get converted. I will explain. They seek another religion because they do not regard God as common to all, thus denigrating Him. Thinking that the grace of God of his own religion is not good enough, they go to another religion. Do they at least accept that the God of the new religion is common to all? If they do, there is no need for conversion The need for conversion from one religion to another, arose because the converts did not believe that the God in the new religion would bestow grace upon them even if they continue to remain in their own religion. That is, they have limited the power of God of the new religion. By getting converted, they think that the new religion will give them more grace.

The great difference between Hinduism and other religions is this. Our religion is the only one that does not say it is the only way to saivation. Our religion does not convert others to it. Because our ancestors had already realised that all religions are the many means for reaching the Paramatma. Every Hindu should be proud of this broad minded concept. The Veda says that all saints talk about truth in different ways. Bhagawan says in the Gita, " Whoever worships me in whatever form, I enhance my divinity myself and settle him in that particular mode of worship."That is why Hindus never indulge in proselytisation, persecution, crusades and jehad to convert others to our faith. Our long history bears out this fact. All experts in historical research accept this. There was no forced conversion even when Hindu kingdoms were established in the Far East. Foreigners who were happy to know about our culture voluntarily came forward to embrace our faith. Most often it is said that our religion spread in other countries through trade and not with the help of the sword.

In my opinion, in the very ancient times, only the Vedic religion existed in the world. Though other religions arose in various parts of the world,some aspects of our religion survive at least as ruins and relics everywhere. Even those research scholars who do not accept this point,agree that others in foreign countries accepted our religion because they liked it and not because of force.

To convert a man to a new religion, there should be a ritual for that purpose. The religions which practice conversion have some kind of

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baptism. Hinduism which has more ritual than any other religion, does not have a ritual for converting others to it This is evidence to the fact that we do not favour conversion.

As soon as passengers disembark from trains, those who drive jatkas, rikshaws and taxis surround them. One can reach one's destination by traveling by any one of the vehicles. It is no wrong on the part of the vehicle drivers to compete with one another in getting some money. It is for their livelihood. But it is meaningless on the part of various religions to compete with one another professing to lead people to Godhead through conversion.

There is a bridge on a river There are many spans which are of equal measurement. But to one who is near a span it would seem that it is the biggest span. Others would appear small. Likewise it is because one's own religion appears to be the best of all, one tends to invite others to embrace it. But as all spans are equal in size, there is no need for anyone to forsake the faith in which he is born.

It is not wrong if there are differences in ideals and rituals among various religions. It is not necessary that all religions should have common rituals. Without attempting to make the religions uniform, one should seek for unity among all. Uniformity is not necessary. There should be unity.

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THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A PREACHER

The philosophers and religious leaders all over the world accept Advaita as a supreme concept. You call me as the Advaita- guru. So you would expect me to say that the greatness of the Advaita philosophy the cause of there being so many people following that doctrine.

But as I examine this situation, I wonder if all the people in the world follow the Advaita discipline. The people everywhere, follow so many doctrines belonging to so many faiths. People in the same country change their religion. In the time of Buddha, those belonging to orthodox Vedic religion became Buddhists. Later many Hindus embraced Christianity and Islam. Jains have become Vaishnavites. During Ramanuja's time many became Vaishnavites. Many followed the teaching of Madhwa in his time. When Adi Sankara appeared on the scene the non-vedic religions like Buddhism and Jainism suffered a set-back. Those who followed Karma Marga which is a part of orthodox Vedic religion got back to Advaita which is the complete Vedic faith. Why did those religions which flourished once begin to decline? Do the people who embrace a new faith do so after examining its philosophy? Intellectuals might have evaluated the concepts before accepting them. But can we say the same about the common people belonging to a particular religion? I would not..

If the common people accept a faith or the philosophy contained in it, they must be able to explain the concepts of the philosophy when asked. They must be able to adduce reasons for holding their religious principles as being better than those of others. But in fact, the millions of people belonging to a particular faith, would not be able to expound the technical aspects of their belief. Those who are Hindus do not know anything about it.

So, I think, no religion flourishes because of its philosophy. Ordinary people are not worried about philosophy. If they find a great saint who is full of compassion and is known to follow good habits they believe him. They follow his faith in the firm belief that whatever he says must be good. On the contrary, though a religion is replete with divine philosophy, the moment the preacher of that religion is found to have deviated from the prescribed code of conduct that religion begins to decline. It is not possible to find the direct reason for people joining religions which have contrary philosophies. But we can find the reason for the decline of

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religions which people used to be proud of for its greatness. We can find how a religion declined, we can understand how it grew and flourished.

If we look into the causes for the decline of any religion in any country, we will find that there have been irregularities in its institutions and misconduct one the part of those who preached it.

Buddha came. As we listen to his life story and as we look upon his countenance full of peace and compassion, we develop a respect for him. The people in those times must have felt the same. We learn from the satirical play, "Mattavilasa Prahasanam," written by Mahendra Pallava, how in later days irregularities abounded in Buddhist Viharas. It was at this time that Buddhism began to decline. The growth or the decline of a religion depends upon the quality of its representatives.

As Adi Sankara was a perfect man, people followed him. Then, as Ramanuja and Madhwa came, and were known to be perfect in their own lives, people were attracted by them and their philosophy grew. Recently Gandhiji appeared as a man of selfless and sacrificing spirit and people accepted what he said acclaiming it as Gandhism. If an ideology is great because of its philosophy Gandhism should be at the top now. But we know how it is in day- to-day life.

We are not concerned with religions which attract people through violence or through money. If a religion offers baptism after rendering all kinds of social service people are apt to be attracted by it . It is said therefore that Christianity grew in times of famine. It is also said that when Islam was spread by compulsion people in large numbers had to embrace it. Here it is proved that people do not embrace a religion because of its philosophy. We must also note another thing. Christian missionaries came forward to convert only the slum dwellers saying "You have been suppressed in your religion. We will uplift you if you come to our religion We will offer you education, medicare and other things free".

They made their offers with the support of the government. Even then all the slum dwellers did not embrace that religion. Thousands of slum dwellers, though they felt oppressed in their own religion, did not think much of the facilities offered by any other religionists and refrained from joining it. Of course their own goodness was a reason for their decision. Another reason is that they kept on clinging to their own religion with the conviction that they want to remain in a religion in which great saints have been born during every generation.

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We need not criticise those who indulge in proselytisation. They do so through compulsion or by holding out promise of good things because they firmly believe their religion as being the best. Others who embrace a new faith think that they would get salvation. So it is not wrong to use compulsion or attraction to get converts. We may suppose that they are impelled by such good thoughts.

Religions which do not use compulsion or money power have flourished due to the qualities of the priest and the preachers. It is not enough for representatives of a faith to have only outward appearance. To whichever religion he belongs he should not be selfish. There should be no hatred. There should be moral discipline, good tapes and peace and compassion. Their exceptional qualities should help to remove the shortcomings of those who embrace their faith.

The way to make our religion flourish we must see that such teachers arise in our midst. We need not counter anything. We need representatives who exemplify our religious principles by their lives. Our religion has been alive from time immemorial because of teachers like these. In the future also it will flourish because of them.

If one tries to convert people through wars I cannot oppose him. Nor have I wealth enough to counter one who spends millions in establishing schools and hospitals for proselytizing people. Even granting that we have such facilities our work in converting others would not be genuine. Nor would it last. Because, whatever we do with wealth and power may be lost when someone else comes with more wealth and power. Hence, what we should do is to better ourselves with faith in our soul-force, without depending on external forces. Then our religion would flourish without any propaganda, or force or attraction. The reason for intellectuals in other countries praising Advaita may be the greatness of its ideals. Some of them come to our religion after a good deal of research and self-enquiry. But this will not be applicable to the common people. They require a perfect life to hold on to.

To speak to you often that someone with such peace, compassion and knowledge should appear in our midst is a duty. If one such person arises from amongst you there will be nothing greater than that.

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VEDIC RELIGION: NAMELESS RELIGION

We call our religion Hinduism. In fact it does not have this name. "Hindu" means "Kindness". He who eschews violence is a Hindu according to some. This is a clever way of description of the term. Nowhere in our old sastras is there a term as " Hinduism".

The foreigners called us Hindus. As they had to cross the Indus river to enter our country, they gave us the name Hindus and the religion of the country came to be called as Hinduism. A country is named after the region adjacent to it. There is a funny story by way of illustration.

In the North whoever comes as Bairagi would be given alms. The Northerners feel that the people from the South do not do so. They sing a song in which there is a line " Illa Illa Po. Telungi kahte which means that the Telugus deny alms to them. Telugus will say only "Vellu, Vellu, and not the word 'Po'.

Only Tamilians would say so. Then why does this Bairagi song have this line? When the Bairagi comes down South, the Telugu country is the first they reach. So they should have thought that it was also part of Tamil country.

In the same way Telugus call Tamil country as 'Arava Nadu'. The region below the Andhra region is called "Arava". They had applied the same name to the region which is beyond that.

Likewise the foreigners who saw the Indus region called the entire country "Indu".

But 'Hindu' is not our ancient name. Nor Hinduism is the name of the Vedic religion or our Sanatana Dharma. If we look into the source material we cannot find any name for our religion.

When I thought about it I was dissatisfied.

One day someone told me "Ramu has come". I asked " Which Ramu?" In that case are there many Ramus?", I was asked. Only then I realised that I had asked the question owing to some past incident. There were four persons in our village with the name Ramu. To distinguish one from another we used the appellations "Black Ramu, fair Ramu, tall Ramu and short Ramu". It was because of that habit I had asked "Which Ramu ?" When there is only one Ramu no adjunct is necessary.

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It was at once clear why our religion had no name. Only when there were many religions there should be names to distinguish one from another. When there was only one religion why should there be a name?

Except our religion others have been established by some great soul. Before that great man who preached that faith, there was no such religion. Buddhism has been established by Gautama Buddha. So it could not have been in existence before him. Jainism was established by Mahavira. Christianity was founded by Jesus Christ. Thus each religion was founded by some great soul. Before all these religions were founded, our religion was there. Only this religion was prevailing all over the world. As there was no other religion there was no need to give this a name. When I learned this I was satisfied. There also arose a respect towards our religion.

Well, let us regard this as the original religion.. The question may arise as to who, founded this religion. However much we search we cannot find him who founded this. It cannot be Vyasa who composed the Brahmasutra; nor Krishna Bhagwan who gave us the Gita. For they too have been quoting from the Vedas which were in existence before their time. Nor can we attribute this to the rishis who gave us the Veda mantras, because they say that they did not compile the Vedas. If we tell them that the mantras came to us after them and whenever we utter a mantra we begin with a name of one of them, they say "It is true the mantras came through them but they did not compose them. They say that when they were in meditation the manras appeared to them in space. We saw them as 'mantradrastha' but we were not 'mantrakartas', - those who composed them."

All sounds emanate from space. It is from them vision arises. This is what is known as the universe arising out of the vibrations in space, in science. The sages saw the vibrations as mantras for the welfare of all life of this creation. But the mantras were not composed by them. These were parts of the breath, of the Paramatma who is Himself space and are "Apaursheya", that is not made by any purusha(man). The sages saw them and gave them to the world.

If we realise this, we would not be dissatisfied with the knowledge that we cannot find the founder of our religion. In fact, we would be proud of that realisation. We would be delighted to know that we have the unique fortune of being the heirs of a religion which was there from time immemorial as the breath of the Paramatma.

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WORLD-WIDE RELIGION

Our religion now known as HInduism was the only religion which was prevalent all over the world in ancient times. As it was the only religion there was no need for a name for it. That is why there is no name for Hinduism in old classics-this is my opinion.

When we look into the researches of ancient archaeological material, we find a good deal of our Vedic concept in all other countries. The treaty of Rameses II with Hitites which was concluded in Egypt in 1300 B.C is now available as a result of archaeological excavations. In that it is stated that the treaty was concluded with Mitra-Varuna as witnesses. Mitra-Varuna are deities mentioned in our Vedas. In the region of Madagascar seventy five percent of the names of places are Sanskrit names. The names of some rulers of Egypt bear resemblance with the name of our Rama.

In the Southern part of the globe, such similarities exist. In Mexico, there is a festival during our Navarthri celebrations. It is known as 'Rama-Sita' there. Wherever excavations are undertaken, one finds the idols of Vinayaka. Before the advent of the Spaniards, the inhabitants of Central America were known as Aztecs. This is a corrupt form of Astika.

In Peru, they perform puja in the temple of the Sun, at the time of the Vishus. These people were called Incas,'Inah ' is a name of the Sun. Don't we describe Rama as ' Inakula Tilaka?'

I saw a picture of the dance of naked Australian aborigins in a book. (Nature and Tribes of Central Australia by Spencer Gillan pages 128-129) The legend under the pictures was of' Siva Dance '. I looked closely and found that each of the dancers had a third eye on his forehead.

In Borneo, there is the Virgin Forest which no one has ventured to enter since the beginning of time. In that forest was found an inscription in Grantha characters. The inscription describes the Yagas performed by kings and the flag poles planted and the grants made to Brahmins in the form of Karpaga trees. They call this the Yupa inscription of Mulavaraman of Koeti. It is the Englishmen who had mocked at our religion, who made these discoveries.

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There is another aspect which occurs to me. It may sound funny. The Sagaras dug the earth to find the sacrificial horse. The sea which was formed at that time became Sagara. At last they found the horse near the Ashrama of Kapila Rishi. They ill- treated him under the impression that he had captured the horse. He destroyed them by the power of his fire. This is the story in Ramayana. If we regard America which is under us as the antipodes, California may be Kapilaranyam in a corrupted form. It is like Madurai becoming Marutai. Near California there is an island called Horse Island and another as Ash island.

There is another point regarding Sagara and Sagaram. It is said that even the Sahara desert was an expanse of the sea. It may be that Sagara became Sahara.

From the existence of symbols of our religion all over the world, research scholars say that our people went to those places and people from those places came here. To me it seems that there was the same dharma everywhere. These symbols were those left over in those places in ancient times.

Research scholars have also found the artifacts found in other countries during the historical period of two or three thousand years, that Indians who went there replaced the civilisation there by their own culture. But even before four thousand years there were Vedic symbols in many countries. That is, these symbols were there even as civilisation began there. Only after this the inhabitants there began to have a religion. In Greece a religion arose which resulted in big temples being built for Gods. There are Vedic aspects in that religion also. In the countries where Christ lived, there were in the Semitic and Hebrem regions the aspects of Vedic culture including the Varanashrama divisions. The aborigines in countries like Mexico had their own religion in which they worshipped the elements of Nature as found in the Vedas. Those religions had many rituals also.

Now there are no such religions including the Hellenic religion which was the acme of civilization. There is generally Christianity there. In the Middle Asian and East Asian countries upto Japan, Buddism has spread. Islam prevails in some places Only in regions of South Africa there are the original religions among the tribals. Even in these religions there are plenty of Vedic aspects. I shall give an example.

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One thing before, I do so. In expounding philosophical concepts, the story form is used. Only thereby will lay men comprehend them. Concepts will not be absorbed by people as such. We have either to clothe them in stories or devise a ritual which can be observed in practice. When one observes these rituals as aspects of one's religious duty, the concepts which are in them as symbols can be understood. All rituals are symbols. It is enough if we understand the underlying truth. I do not say this like those who reject rituals. A ritual by itself has its own power. Nor do I say that the stories in Puranas are expositions of concepts only and that we need not believe them. They are all factual happenings. At the same time, they illustrate philosophical truths. Likewise there is philosophical truth in rituals which are useful to us and which are performed without the thought of gain.

But in course of time, these rituals and stories might be separated from the concept which constitutes its inner meaning or even forgotten.

In foreign countries where religions were born without any connection with the original Vedic religion, the Vedic truths had thus got changed.

Now to come to the example I was thinking of.. You might have heard about the story of Adam and Eve in Hebrew religion. There was the tree of knowledge. It was God's orders that the fruit of that tree should not be consumed. Adam did not eat it. But Eve ate it. Then Adam also ate it with the thought whatever befell Eve could befell him also. This is the story in the old Testament of the Bible.

One of our Upanishadic concepts has taken the shape of this story. When this happens, there is confusion owing to the change in time and place. The very basic concept becomes veiled.

What does the Upanishad say? " There are two birds in the Pippala Tree. One is eating the Pippala fruit. The other which does not eat is looking at it, " says the Upanishad. The body is the tree. One eats the fruit of experience thinking himself to be the Jeevatma. He is a bird. Paramatma is the other bird in the story. He activates the Jeeva. But he does not act. He is only bearing witness to the acts of the Jeeva. Though He is the basis of this jeeva, He does not experience - does not eat the fruit - nor does He undergo the effects of Karma.The Upanishad has described this fruit, and the bird eating the fruit in a poetic way. The one who eats is Jeeva. The one who does not is Paramatma - the one who has realised his soul.

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It is this Jeeva who should have become the Eve of the Hebrew religion. ' Ji ' becoming ' E' is a rule in Vyakarana. It is meant that the sounds in the series 'Ja' become 'Ya'. This is how Jumna became Yamuna. ' Yogindra ' is ' Jogindra'. ' Jeeva ' became 'Eve'. ' Atma ' became Adam. ' Pippala ' became apple.

The tree of knowledge is our Bodhi tree. ' Bodham' is Jnanam. It is well-known that Buddha attained Jnana under the Bodhi tree. Even before his time, the Arasu tree was known as Bodhi tree.

When the Upanishad takes a new form in far off countries after many changes, its meaning changes. The Bible story changes to the effect that the Atma which does not experience things also ate the fruit. When we say that the knowledge which is beyond materialstic comfort. is indicated by the Bodhi tree, they call the knowledge of ripening fruit which is worldly wisdom as the tree of knowledge. Still do we not get evidence of the existence of our Vedic religion having been there? Another example will convince you that the original will always be discernible even when it is changed very much in far off countries. Our Thiruppavai and Tiruvembavai songs are not as old as the Vedas. Research scholars date them within the past one thousand five hundred years. Manickavacakar and Andal who composed these songs appeared many centuries after the Vedic and Epic ages. After them Hindu empires were established in countries beyond the seas. The Cholas of Tamil Nadu had expanded their empires. More than their invasions, the commerce also expanded. Our foreign contacts developed through trade. In many countries people adopted the aspects of our religion through contact with these traders. This happened in particular in the Far East Countries like Bali and other Islands which became fully Hindu. Cambodia, Siam which is now Thailand, Indo-China and even regions as far as Manila in the Philippines, came under Hindu cultural influence. It was called Sri Vijaya Empire.

So there was a stage when there was only the Vedic religion everywhere. Later new religions arose in many countries After that Christianity, Islam and Buddhism overtook those religions. When the historical period was definitely established, Hinduism has been revived afresh in many countries especially in the East. It was during this stage that great Tamil Temples like Angkor Vat, Borobudur and Paramban were built there. It was also during this stage that our Tiruppavai and Tiruvembavai reached Thailand.

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During the month of Margazhi (December-January) when we sing these Pavai Songs here, there is an annual festival there. In Thailand, they celebrate a festival in which they observe a dolothsavam (festival of swing) when one is dressed as Siva and the Pavai songs are sung as if Siva and Vishnu are joined together. But they do not know anything about this Pavai literature. It may be said therefore, that except for the fact that the festival occurs in Margazhi there is nothing to suggest that they have anything in common with the Pavai Songs. But why do I refer to them? They call this festival 'Triyambavai and Tripavai".Those who read the Bible do not know anything about the Upanishads, but they have the story that is derived from them. Likewise, though the singing of Tiruppavai and Tiruvembavai has been discontinued, they call the festival in which a man acts as Siva "Triambavai and Tripavai". The name continues. When things change to such an extent in the historical period, in times before three to four thousand years, aspects would have definitely undergone great changes in foreign countries. However, much the change, aspects of Vedic Culture persist to exist there.

What does it mean when we say that our religious features are in evidence in the religions of the tribals who were there in pre- historic times? It is not as if invasions or commercial delegations went there from India and spread our civilization,in that distant past. I feel that this was not done; but Vedic culture was there all the world over even then. Later the religion underwent changes and became their own and in the historical period gave place to Christianity,Islam and Buddhism.

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VARIETIES OF DHARMA

Many activities are necessary in social life. Mental activities, bodily activities; many kinds of such activities are essential for the welfare of humanity. It is wrong to think that one activity is great and another is mean.

Our families need rice, salt, clothing, books and so many other things. For this can everyone of us engage oneself in agriculture, producing salt and weaving clothes? The farmer produces not only for himself but for all. So does the weaver. Thus, some practice commerce, some engage themselves in warfare Just like that some should meditate, perform puja and yaga and maintain the sastras for the spiritual welfare of the world. Our Dharma sastras have devised ways and means so that people can divide among themselves many activities mutually and live with comfort.

" How to divide the activities?". If it is to be on he basis of one's status. Each would estimate his own status to be high. If it is to be on the basis of one's mental attitude. Each would like an activity which would bestow some honour. In that case what would happen to other activities? How to designate people for each activity to fulfill the needs of social life? Would it be proper to assess status and attitude, judging from outside? If all can compete for all activities, would it be possible? Who is to allot the work and how? That is why activities were based on tradition and they were called by a common name 'Varna Dharmam'.

If one undertakes an activity as a traditional assignment ordained by Parameswara, it would provide him with soul-satisfaction. Different rituals are prescribed for different activities so that the person who undertakes that activity may attain salvation Can we ask a physical labourer to fast? To one who is engaged in mental activity physical comfort is not needed. It is for people to get rid of the love for their physical desires that rituals like bathing, penance, fasting and the like are prescribed. If we understand that rituals are based on the nature of activities there is no room for quarrel.

Though we do not understand them, if we continue to observe these rituals without break, they would help us when we understand them in future. It would be better if one, in addition to observing his dharma also helps others to follow their own dharma. We should advise others to

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continue to perform their dharma,instead of competing with them for their dharma.

There is no such thing as great and mean in performing one's duties. Sastras show the way for society to divide itself for doing many things for the common good. If everyone does things according to his own liking, common good will not prevail. Today everyone desires the wealth of others. All would try to follow methods of amassing wealth. In this, there will not be the division of labour meant for the common good. So if all follow their traditional activities and rituals there would be no competition or envy and the common good will prevail together with fulfillment for all. We should ponder over all this if we are not to deform on the pretext of reforming.

The government is responsible for providing food, clothing and shelter for all irrespective of their activity. If the needs are multiplied, there is competition and envy. All this confusion arises because the one great need today is material wealth. This should change and give way to the feeling that God is there for the welfare of all. When one fulfills one's prescribed duty, there would be peace every where.

There are many kinds of eatables; many melodies. In that way many things are to be done in society. If we add salt to sweet payasam because we add it to rasam, it would be distasteful. If we mix the notes of one raga with those of another, it would not be harmonious. Now-a-days people have lost all feelings of taste. Exponents of Puranic stories add funny episodes which people relish. When there are so many good things to eat,some chew tobacco, which has neither taste nor healthy properties. This great disharmony is confusing the classification of dharma meant for common good.

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VARNA DHARMA

In olden days our ovens were fuelled by burning cowdung cakes.In the rainy season it would be difficult to make the oven burn. Even if a few sparks of flame came up, they would be fanned and fire produced. Like that my ambition is to stem up the few sparks of Sanatana Dharma which are still practised by a few good men and make it spread everywhere. That is why I do so many things.

Reformers say that the Varna Dharma in our Sanatana religion, should be discarded as unnecessary and our religion should be recognised in the form of other religions.

What is religion? It is the treatment given to the soul which is afflicted. Only a doctor will know that a patient is suffering from a particular disease and that he could be cured by a particular medicine. The rishis who were always thinking of the welfare of the world by dedicating themselves for that purpose were the custodians of Dharma Sastras. The medicine administered by them is our Sanatana Dharma. In other countries various religionists have supplied various religions as medicine. If we tell the doctor who is treating us to give us the medicine a particular doctor has, will the doctor accede to our request? There are many systems of medicine. One will require austere eschewing of certain things; another will be easy to follow. In one the drug may be bitter; in another it may be sugar-coated. If one follows a prescribed system without trying to mix up all the various ones, one can get cured.

Other religions say only about the dharmas common to all living beings. Our Vedic religion has laid down the same as Samanya Dharma for all. The Samanya Dharmas prescribed for us in our religion are ahimsa, truth, purity, control of the senses, not possessing even a little more than what is necessary, devotion to God, respect for parents and kindness towards all living beings. In addition to this, special dharmas are prescribed to those in society who are divided on the basis of traditional duties.

If these special dharmas are also made Samanya Dharmas, no one will be able to follow them. I will cite an example.. Buddism has a common dharma - non-eating of meat. But what do we see in buddhist countries today? All are non-vegetarians. Our Rishis and custodians of Dharma Sastras are well-versed in the knowledge of human nature. So they prescribed vegetarianism only to some sections as a special

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Dharma. Observing this, others also eschew meat on holy occasions, during penance and during the propitiation of the ancestors' souls.

The old religions which prescribed all dharmas as common in other countries, have declined. The Hellenic religion in Greece and the Hebrew religion in Central Asia have disappeared. In the East Confucianism and Shintoism are prevalent only in a few places. Christianity, Buddhism and Islam which have replaced these faiths do not have Special Dharma for separate Varnas. Non-believers are increasing in all countries. They either become atheists or get dissatisfied with their own religion and turn to our bhakti marga and self-inquiry. One cannot say how long people would follow faithfully the religions in those countries. I do not say this as a representative of Hindus with the intention of denigrating other religions. My desire is that all those in other religions should attain spiritual enlightenment in their own faiths. I do not invite anyone to come to my religion. To do so would be against the basic tenet of our religion. Nothing happens in the world by accident.

Bhagawan decrees the birth of human beings in various religions according to the state of their mental evolution. They can attain salvation by following the religion in which they are born. This is my belief. If I point out certain features which are not part of other religions, it is not for rectifying them. Nor is it meant to attract them to our religion. I say all this on seeing other religionists denigrating ours without understanding the special features. Some of our own people accept their criticism. If they accept our theory, that of Karma and rebirth, the basic aspects of their religion would no be affected. What is the basic and main aspect of any religion? It is devotion to God by believing in Him. That aspect would not be affected by these theories. Bhakti is the important aspect of those religions. I do not think that other religions in other countries are facing difficulties. Nor am I happy to think so. I am only quoting the opinions of Toynbee, Paul Brunton and Koestler. I am only repeating what they said about disbelief spreading everywhere, with atheism growing day by day

This attitude is evident in our country too. But foreigners who have studied the situation in other countries are all agreed in saying that compared to other countries, the situation is not so bad here; that religious feeling has not declined here. Many devotees from other countries are coming to our country in large numbers.

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When we think of it, there is decline of religious feeling even in our country only after it has been felt that the old belief in Varna Dharma has given place to the thought that there must be uniformity. There is no doubt about this.

It is strange; to think that there is no unity or mutual adjustment in a religion that keeps people divided into many sections. It also seems that such a religion will wither away as a result of its inner contradictions. Such a religion should have disappeared without a trace as a result of many invasions since Alexander. But in fact it has not. Religions which had common rituals for all have vanished through the ages. Even those religions which are still alive, are facing challenges. But our religion which has divided society under Varna Dharma is alive, clinging fast to its faith We should examine this aspect with a clear mind and without getting emotional.

What is the secret of our religion being alive in spite of following Varna Dharma for thousands of years? We cannot say that the Brahmins who believed in the preservation of our Shastras were in a majority. Nor did they have the strength of arms. They did not have enough material wealth either. The Brahmin amassing wealth is a recent aberration. According to Sastras the Brahmin must be poor. Why should others follow divisions imposed according to Sastras by a section which did not have arms or wealth and was not in a majority ? Were they victims of a belief all the time? Occasionally a Buddha or a Jaina appeared and advised having Samanya Dharma for all without respecting Vedas and Yaga and advocated Prakrit, the language of the common people in place of Samskrit . Thereby a new way of life was indicated. Even then people embraced those faiths attracted by them only temporarily. Later the attraction waned. The old Vedic religion revived itself.

One saint sang ' It is a wonder that life exists in a body which has nine outlets; not leaving it'.. In that way, it is a wonder that Hinduism with its inner dissensions has not died. It would not have been a wonder if it had disappeared..

What do we find if we examine this phenomenon impartially? Does it not follow that there is something in our religion which is not found in other religions; when we consider that when other religions had disappeared this religion has been in existence for thousands of years. It is Varna Dharma which is peculiar to our religion. So, though reformists

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say that Varna Dharma is the cause for the decline of our religion, the society which has this feature continues to exist. It also follows that there should be something in the old Varna Dharma which is better than the concept of equality. That is why our religion which has social divisions still manages to live in spite of opposition.

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UNITY IN DIVERSITY

When thinking of Varna Dharma, I am reminded of a process. In an airship, there were gas bags in the initial stage. When it was realissed that a leak in the bag would result. in an accident, many small gas bags were fixed. Though they were separate they were fixed near one another and together they served to protect the airship which was free from disrepair. This is like the separate dharmas in our religion resulting in unity in diversity.

It is very difficult to tie together numerous twigs. Even if they are tied up the twigs will soon disintegrate and the bundle would be loose. If one twig is taken out from the bundle by force, the entire collection will become loose and it will be easy to remove other twigs one by one. In the result all the twigs would be separated.

Suppose we make small handy bundles of the twigs instead of trying to tie them up all in one big bundle, each little collection would remain tight. Later all these small bundles can be assembled together and tied into a big bundle. This will be more tight and tidy than the one which is made of all the twigs in one lot. Even if it gets loosened, no small bundle would give way like the lone twig in a big bundle. The bundle which is made up from the smaller bundles will remain in tact and tight.

It is impossible to arrange the entire society in one structure. Who is to look after and control a society which cannot be knit together? It is for this purpose that a caste was assigned to perform each traditional activity. One can understand the structural nature of such assignment. People belonging to each varna were separated as small groups or castes. Each Group has its own head. Those heads controlled their castes and punished those who committed irregularities. Even the Government punishes criminals. But this does not convince the

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criminals. So crimes continue to be committed. But the punishment meted out by the heads of castes had its effect and there was no repetition of the crimes for a time. Till then the police and the courts did not have much work.

The kind of punishment the heads of castes meted out was ostracism. Even if the accused belonged to what is now described as backward caste, the expulsion from one's own caste affected one very much. It was considered very rigorous and a disgrace.

What do we infer from this? That each caste enjoyed full rights within its limits. If there were thoughts of high caste and low caste, there would have arisen inferiority complex. No one except the Brahmin and the Kshatriya would have had respect for and involvement in his caste. If these were not there they would not have minded ostracism. But when there were social groups known as castes there was mutual kindness and respect within the groups and a kind of relationship evolved. That is why ostracism constituted severe punishment. Now many cling to their caste on account of the concession granted to backward classes; but do not regard their caste with respect. In those days there were no such concessions. But we find that till three or four generations back there was deep regard by all for their caste. There were no caste-conflicts and competitions. They had pride in performing their duties and in following the prescribed special rituals, rules and practices and were satisfied.

If the police try to control those who indulge in disturbing peace the latter themselves attack the police. But in olden times, no one opposed the head of a caste. The reason was the control by police was from outside. In the case of control by the heads of castes, there was a feeling of a control by one of themselves. Thus even without arms and numbers, the heads of castes were able to reduce the incidence of crimes. Though people were divided on the basis of caste and its activity and rituals, they were united.

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WHY IS IT HERE ALONE?

Are there not other countries in the world? Are there no religions there? Those religions have not prescribed traditional activity for people and established castes. Why should it be so in our case alone? This question arises.

Even in countries where there are no diverse castes there are priests, intellectuals and workers. They are so even today.

Still, if we consider it impartially without any sentiments of it being in our own country, there is nowhere a glorious civilization as ours. Though great civilizations arose off and on there, they did not last for thousands of years like ours. It is not as if we pride ourselves upon our greatness. From the days of Alexander down to the present day when there is so much decline, foreigners talk about Hindu civilization with great admiration. What is the secret?

There were great saints, prophets, devotees, philosophers and martyrs in those countries. Statistically, in no other country, were there such a long unbroken line of saints, sadhhus, seers, philosophers, devotees and pilanthropists over thousands of years as were in our country. The great souls who appeared in our country outnumber the entire total in other countries put together. It is people of other countries, not we, who praise our country as the land of saints and sages. They express wonder at the works on Vedanta philosophy and pay homage.

The world holds that there is nothing anywhere to equal our art, architecture, music, poetry, astrology and mathematics and praises them endlessly. They say that there is noting like our Upanishads, Gita, Ramayana and Sakuntalam elsewhere. The same is said of the Tamil devotional classics like Tevaram and Divya Prabhandam. They marvel at the Kural for the brevity with which it expounds so many great truths. Foreigners admire our temples towers, sculptures, music and Bharatha Natyam and rush here to learn more about these things. Though the British enslaved us and ruled over us by dividing us by attributing non-existent drawbacks, they undertook research into our shastras and got them translated into their own language.

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What is the specially in such a great civilization flourishing only here? If we consider what special feature was here which was not in other countries, we find only Varanashrama Dharma as the answer.

Reformists consider our country as the repository of all drawbacks because of Varna Dharma. But it is the same country which is more celebrated for philosophy, behaviour and art than other countries.

Philosophy, art and classics could not have flourished for generations unless there was social stability and a peaceful atmosphere, and philosophers and artists could not have appeared in such large numbers.

In other countries, the social structure nurtured by their religions lacked such stabilising factors. It may be said that they did not have a sociological foundation. They did not lay down rules for orderly running of society except for advising generally that one should not steal, should not utter falsehood, should not commit adultery, should be truthful, should sacrifice oneself and be non-violent. They arranged for institutional life by prescribing codes of conduct for mendicants and priests. But they did not give special thought to any arrangement designed to integrate society by the people mutually supporting one another.

What was the result? Though there was progress in philosophy, national welfare, commerce, agriculture and labour in other countries, there was also competition and jealousy. Without being satisfied with a particular activity, all tried to do everything. "There is no anxiety about our livelihood. There is our activity meant for us. As this was the traditional occupation, it is easily handled by us." Such stability is not found as it was in our country earlier. If this can be obtained social welfare and peace will follow. Because it was so, so many good qualities prevailed among the people of our country There have been countless great men who exemplified it by their lives. Because this stability is lacking there is competition and conflict now.

If what the reformists say is true, social revolutions should have taken place in our country where, with Varanashrama Dharma the majority of people have been suppressed according to them. But the very term is new to us. Only after reading about French, Russian and American revolutions, we learnt that it may be necessary for big societies to rise in revolt. The history of other countries tells us about more and more revolutions. We also learn that no revolution has achieved any

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permanent results. A revolution is followed by another within fifty or a hundred years. That is, people have always been dissatisfied. Today it is worse. Everywhere, there are disorders, violent disturbances, agitations and strikes. Often one government falls and another takes its place and there is ferment everywhere. There is no revolution in countries like Russia where the government is despotic and where it demolishes any dissidence. (This discourse was delivered in 1958.)

Even there, it is said that there may be eruptions at any time. Often a scholar or a writer at the risk of his life defects to othier countries and exposes the despotism prevalent there. People do not seem to be fully satisfied there. In India there has never been a dictatorship. So much art and culture could not have been produced by slaves. Nor have we pleaded with other countries that we are oppressed. Unless there is an independent attitude such classics, art and temples would not have come into being. It would not be proper to say that the majority of the people are being exploited by priest-craft due to superstition. It may apply to the people of South Africa and South America where culture has not developed. There the priest is the ruler. His appearance too would be fearful. He would manipulate people through witchcraft. He can punish people directly. It is not so in our country. People belonging to all castes are intelligent, pious and interested in spiritual pursuits. The puranas tell us that there were great souls in all the castes. Emperors like Sivaji and Chandragupta and administrators like Sekkizhar have come from the fourth Varna. Here the priests have no power to punish. The priest has to be the mildest person. Sastras say that he has to punish himself if there is any irregularity.

The white man punishes the Negro if he touches him. In our country if the so called untouchable touches the priest it is the latter who has to undergo the act of purification. Untouchability is there. What I am saying is such practice is not followed by threatening or suppressing or punishing the untouchable. It would not have been possible to deceive or bypass a civilization that is admired all the world over. As all the people were in fact benefited by the Dharma Sastra arrangement, no one revolted.

The old Varna Dharma in day to day life did not cause dissatisfaction to the people. And the civilization flourished. What have we achieved now by breaking the old system and trying to follow new systems on the score of equality and progress? We see that disorder, falsehood, deceit, corruption and prostitution prevailing. Everywhere there are agitations,

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strikes, demonstrations, hartals, police repression, and curfew all-over. We are subject to ridicule by other nations as we have not attained a visible level in foreign trade and exchange. The days when India was a topic of wonder are over. What does it mean when a small country like Pakistan can attack us? It only shows that our country's soul-force has lost its power.

Why did we lose the power? Which did give us strength all these thousands of years and helped to develop our civilization? By giving up what did we become ashamed to call ourselves the heirs of such a glorious civilization? If we consider deeply, we will find that as long as there was Varna Dharma in our country our civilization stood like a rock to the amazement of the world and that from the time Varna Dharma began to decline we are going downhill every day.

To the question why Varna Dharma should be here only, the answer is :- At least here we desired a civilization which facilitated divine experience, development of art and ennobling qualities and for that purpose we felt that at least here Varna Dharma should be prevalent. If this were not so, there would be competition and jealousy. All would prefer to have easy access to profitable education and work. But all cannot have the opportunity. The result would be inequality and hatred. When there is unemployment among educated youth, they want restrictions for admission into colleges. As engineers have increased they plan to close down engineering colleges. There has to be a control somewhere instead of every one having opportunities. This was the traditional control in olden days. Then there was job satisfaction as the activity was insured and there was the sense of dignity of labour as practiced by the ancestors. The people also loved their work and because of that there was efficiency. Now, as each is after money, work is not done properly. In the olden days money was secondary and work was performed with affection as it was thought it was one's own. There was order in society.

No civilization is without perfection. We should not denigrate a perfect arrangement like Varna Dharma.

Whether we will succeed in maintaining it as it was practiced or not, or whether we fail to maintain it with the thought that it would not be practicable, only that system has bestowed on us much glory. It is wrong to pick holes in the arrangement. We should at least feal that it is heinous to denigrate it.

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WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?
WHAT IS THE REMEDY?

Who is responsible for politicians and intellectuals for branding caste as an uncivilized arrangement? Who caused the disruption of a good order? As I have myself raised these questions, I will answer them. It is the Brahmin who is the cause for a lop-sided view of Varna Dharma. He is responsible for the destruction of a Dharma which has been bestowing soul force and common welfare for ages.

The Brahmin neglected his duty of studying the Vedas and performing his prescribed duties. First, he neglected his duty; then he left his village and went to town. He eschewed his rituals and the other symbols of his Dharma. He cropped his hair. wore full-suits. Rejecting the study of the Vedas which was prescribed for him, he got involved in mundane European education. He fell into the trap of jobs offered by them. In addition, he copied the dress and behaviour of the Europeans. He became a victim of money, sensual pleasures, higher education, science, and government jobs and adopted the new life style foregoing the great Dharma which was handed down the generations by the Vedic rishis and his ancestors.

Sastras say that a Brahmin shall not desire wealth and should not accumulate property. As long as he lived according to the norms laid down by the Sastras and helped the growth of the world welfare through Vedic chanting and penance, people of the other castes showed affection and respect towards him. They regarded him as guide and example.

Those of other castes observed him leaving his activity and reaching the city where he received education and got jobs provided by the Englishmen and his regarding himself as if he was the most civilized. As they followed him in all the bad ways of life, they also let go the work which had so far given them satisfaction and began to take to city life, English education and government service.

The brahmin had been doing intelligent work for thousands of years. In the olden days, his intellect was dedicated to the service of society instead of for his own benefit. Because of this sacrificing spirit his intellect was sharp. But now, as he has neglected social service and longs for material benefits, his intellect has lost its brightness. God has given him

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intellectual power for discharging his duties. Once the duties have been forgotten the intellectual light also has faded.

When you stop pedaling the bicycle, the vehicle moves by the force provided by the pedaling earlier. Just like that, even after the Brahmin neglected acquiring spiritual knowledge for worldly knowledge, the accumulated wisdom of his traditional duty as practiced by his ancestors served to keep his intellect bright. It was the brain-power which made him succeed in the Western education to the amazement of the Westerners. He became equipped enough to teach them, the nuances of their own law and industry by studying them deeply.

Why was the Vedic culture which survived the Muslim rule affected by the advent of the Europeans ? The reason is, science and the machine came along with the Europeans. Several new ideas which were not till then known, came into being. Science revealed new aspects of knowledge. This is good. But with the knowledge of things, desires leading to irregularities also arose. Science gave us machines to do work. After the advent of electricity and steam power, much work could be done in quicker time. This resulted in more comfort. But these comforts benefited only the senses. Once the senses attain comfort it will lead to the expansion of desires without limit. Thus, needless, soul-destroying forces arose. These material comforts got attraction from the knowledge of science brought by the European. In the name of reason, it made people to regard religious affairs which were based on faith and experience as superstition and falsehood. He who did not forsake his Dharma even under Muslim rule, gave it up now and went in search of comfort. He has learnt to dress in tip-top style like an Englishman and has developed the habits of smoking and dancing They readily accommodated him with jobs as he had shown progress in their ways of life.

At this stage there was a great set-back.

Till then every group had a traditional vocation and was at peace without worrying about livelihood. Now, copying the Brahmin they too had forsaken their traditional activity and grabbed the jobs offered by the British in railways, Government offices, and the like.

As machines increased in number, manual labour decreased and some workers had to change to other kinds of activity. Instead of there being a particular kind of work for a particular group, the growing menace

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of competition was necessarily followed by envy, hatred, hostility and quarrel. As I said in the case of pedaling the bicycle, the ancestors of the Brahmin had provided the momentum necessary for him to succeed in education and employment. Though the Brahmin belongs to a minority in society, he had achieved a great number of jobs in public service, colleges, in medical and law departments. Because of that, others turned, naturally, hostile towards him. The white man found that he could stabilize his rule by nurturing this hostility. He concocted the theory of Aryan-Dravidian racial difference. He sowed the seeds of difference amid the children of the same mother country. This atmosphere of hostility grew up.

The Brahmin did another thing to aggravate this hostility. Though he forsook his caste Dharma and, along with the White man condemned the old arrangement as barabarous, he spoke about equality protesting against exploitation.

At the same time he did not join with others ; but considered himself as higher than men of other castes.He had not moved physically, with others earlier, But there was a reason for it. In respect of a variety of factors, there had to be difference, among the groups according to their avocations. They had to live in different kinds of surroundings. There must be bright light where a scene is shot. In a factory those who work in the canteen should be spotlessly clean. The clothing of those working at machines will be dirty. Does it follow that the waiter in the canteen is higher than the man at the machine? Likewise he who nourishes intelligence without thought of the self has to fast. He who is in the army must have nourishing food with meat.. Simply because there is difference between the Brahmin and the Kshatriya in food habits will it mean that there is hostility between them ? If, because there is no hostility, the Brahmin moves physically close with the solider and begins to eat along with him will he not be tempted to taste the kind of food the other man eats? That temptation will drag him along to the extent where his own Dharma would be spoiled.. Each community has its own prescribed Dharma, customs, habits and rituals. But if, in the name of equality, all move with one another physically, closer, and confuse these customs and rituals, activity will be hampered and the common dharma will be spoilt. That is why they had separate streets in villages for Brahmins, the vellalas and the slum dwellers This was possible in village life. It has become necessary now for all to work in a place, move in a lift, and eat the same kind of food in the canteen. Thus in a variety of ways people

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have to live in a mixed way The Brahmin who has to observe rituals and observe fasting, has begun to live like others. Till now his observance of the rituals was also for the good of others too. He was like a trustee and maintained the Dharma for the benefit of all. Now claiming equality with them, he is competing with them for all jobs which causes mutual hostility. As if this were not enough, he, internally regards himself as higher than those, without in any way observing the prescribed discipline. This naturally aggravates the hostility.

Like the dirty man who spoils a tank of pure water, the Brahmin not only spoilt himself but also made others give up their dharma. He had nothing to think highly of himself. Even when he stuck to his own Dharma he had no reason to think himself as being higher than others. He should with modesty think that he is doing his dharma as others are also doing theirs. As others saw that he was observing his own dharma with austere rituals, without the thought of the self, they, of their own accord gave him a status and respected him, Today, he has by his behaviour brought upon himself hostility and abuse of others.

That the Brahmin is the cause for the ruin of the Hindu society is my considered opinion. Some people try to justify this. The Brahmin has to spend all his time to chant the vedas and perform penances. It is necessary to devote his entire life for this purpose. If he spends all his time in chanting the Veda and maintaining the Sastras, what about his livelihood? If he goes in search of wealth his life time mission will not be possible. It is not a part-time job. If he has a job for his livelihood, his rituals will be affected. As a result of that, the power of his Vedic practice will decline and the welfare of the world will be affected. That is why the Sastras sanctioned that only the Brahmin could solicit alms. Instead of his having to beg, the rulers made arrangements for grant of lands to satisfy his needs as they found that the Brahmin by his chanting the Veda and maintaining the shastras, was of benefit to the world. They gave the Brahmin lands, houses, cows and money. But the Brahmins should not receive them without limit. If they did so, they will become victims to sensory comfort and prevent the development of their souls. If they receive too much they will have to amend the rules according to the wishes of the benefactor. That is why Sastras laid down that the Brahmins should not have even an ioṭa more than what they need. According to this arrangement, the Brahmins followed their dharma under the patronage of the rulers.

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Some argue that after the advent of the English rule, the Brahmins did not enjoy royal patronage and that they could not eke out a livelihood without English education, and public service. They were forced to avail of these opportunities by force of circumstances. ; so they could not be blamed according to these apologists.

This may be true to an extent; but it is not wholly true according to me. Before the English there was the Moghul Empire. There were also some Sultans. During those times a few pandits did take service in the courts of the rulers. But there were others who continued to discharge their duties without royal Patronage. Only within the last one hundred years agraharams were abandoned. ; the village fell into ruins ; schools teaching the Vedas declined and the lands were converted into mere documents. Till a generation before that, true Vedic Dharma was in tact.

The Hindu Rajahs were not the only ones who helped to maintain Vedic Dharma. In Hindu society, all those belonging to various Varnas sincerely believed that Vedic Dharma should not be allowed to decline and that the Brahmin caste should not be ruined. For this purpose they gave generously to the Brahmin. Who provided the wherewithal for the hundreds of Vedic schools which are now empty for want of Brahmin pupils? Most of them were Nattukottai Nagarattars and Vysyas and Vellalas who were landlords. There is no limit to the number of temples. Together with their services to the temples they have also established Vedic schools all over Tamilnadu. The big landlords among the Vellalars also have donated much for the Vedic schools. Even after the advent of the British, if the Brahmin had resisted their overtures and lived according to the rules laid down by the Sastras, the others in society would surely have provided him with the necessities of life. Even when they had not given him up, the Brahmin by himself deserted his Agraharam and the Vedic schools. He had tasted the comfortable life which Western civilization brought in the name of science. He has given up the ideal of tending the body to the extent necessary for spiritual development. The excuse that he forsook his dharma only when there was no scope for livelihood is not valid. We must accept that he had developed greed for unnecessary things.

If he had no food in the village he should have been satisfied with what was available in the cities like Madras. If he was satisfied the above excuses would be all right. But what is the reality? If he learns that he can get two thousand rupees in Delhi when he is getting one thousand

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in Madras, he immediately rushes to Delhi. The little that he practised by way of Dharma here is given up when he goes there. After that if New York offers him 4,000 dollars, he leaves our continent to go there and live in a wayward manner. He gives up the little remains of his culture. If the military offers more pay he joins it. He does not mind having to eat meat and consume liquor. He is prepared to do anything for money. So there can be no excuse for the Brahmin giving up his Dharma.

I go a step further. Let us assume for the sake of argument that people of other castes among us lost their hold on old Dharmas because of the advent of the English, of science and of the machine. Also assume that other castes refused to protect the Brahmin as a result of the English imposing the Aryan-Dravidian distinction and that a stage had come when the brahmin could get food only when he left his home. Even if the conditions were like this I insist that the Brahmin should have persisted in doing his Dharma as if it was a life and death question.

But it is no use speaking about what the previous generations should have done. They are not here. What I say about them, I repeat for those who are now here.

That is, one should not give up one's Dharma even at the risk of one's life. Death is always there. But we are going to die after amassing wealth and after earning the hostility of others and having forsaken our own Dharma. Is it not better to die after maintaining our Vedic rituals upto the end? Let others praise or abuse us for being like this. We are not concerned with that. As long as we are not competing with others, none would show hostility or jealousy towards us. They may ridicule us as not keeping up with the times. Let them do so. Even now we are subject to ridicule. It is better to be ridiculed for following our Dharma than for having given it up.

People are ready to fight for their country and their language. It is not as if it is a freedom struggle. Even to prevent a part of a district from being merged with another, people are prepared for self-immolation. Why not the Brahmin risk his life for maintaining his Dharma? Instead of adopting an alien culture and thereby acquiring comforts why cannot he risk his life for his Dharma? What is the reason for the Brahmin resisting change under Muslim rule and adopting it under the British? It is the White Man who brought in science and machinery. The automobile and electricity which also came in resulted in labour-saving devices. As so many

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facilities which could not even be imagined before, came with the White Man and, having been attracted by their glamour, the Brahmin fell into their way of life. This is advanced as a reason. But this cannot justify the result.

The Brahmin's body is not meant for sensory comforts. It is meant for preserving Vedic practices for the welfare of the world. The basic tenet is that no additional sensory attribute should be there. His surrendering to new comforts which were easily obtained at the expense of that Dharma is totally wrong. Preserving one's own Dharma even under unfavorable circumstances is a great thing. That the Brahmins did not do so is a great mistake. As a result of that we who are the children of the same mother suffer from dissensions. We have also caused anxiety to others. First it was the Brahmin who was denied seats in colleges and government employment; later this situation affected others also. As long as village life was conducted by human energy, everything was allright. With the advent of machine power and industrialisation, life has become complicated and all are suffering in the matter of college admission and employment.

What is the remedy? If you ask me whether I expect all Brahmins to give up the present way of life and return to Vedic pursuits, I must say I expect so. The seat of a guru or the institution of Acharyahood is not necessary if we keep quiet when the basic Dharma has been lost. Even if it seems impossible, it is to make it possible that religious institutions like maths exist. They should devote all their energies to attain this ideal. There are people who believed that it was not possible to make the White Man quit India. So many things which were thought impracticable have been achieved in this world. It is not for me to give up thinking that it is not possible. It is up to you to decide whether a thing is possible or not. My duty is to go on dinning into your ears what has been laid down in Dharma Sastras. I have to emphasize that you should follow what the sastras have ordained as your duty in spite of all unfavorable circumstances.

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THE LEAST THAT COULD BE DONE

Whether the present society changes completely or not, whether it could be changed or not, we should see that a group of people who has the task of preserving the Vedas as its life-work always exists. I am not saying this because I want the Brahmin caste to last. It is not necessary that a caste should survive for self interest. It has to be there for the welfare of the world. I say that the world will be protected only if the Vedic sounds prevail. So I hold that there should not be a single Brahmin who does not know the Vedas. I maintain that the only remedy for all the ills of today is the Brahmin's returning to the Vedic mode of life.

The least I say is this. It does not matter if the present - day Brahmins do not have the courage or the sacrificing spirit for the purpose. If you cannot return to Vedic practices you should at last train your children in them. I want you to see that there is no Brahmin in the next generation who does not know the Vedas.

If after experiencing all these defects, you do not like your children to turn to the Vedas and with that they also should follow the life-style which you think is comfortable, I shall concede another thing. I do not mind your getting your children educated for the purposes of employment and sending them to other jobs instead of Vedic practice. Even while they are getting the present kind of education, celebrate their upanayanam before they are eight and after that arrange for your boys to recite the Veda for one hour for a day, for a period of ten years. I say, do this at least. This should be arranged for every Brahmin boy. You may not get instructiors for every family to do so. That is the present situation. For this reason and in the interest of economy arrange for common classes for Vedic recital in every area of a town. If this is arranged on a cooperative basis, even poor children who lack facilities will get the benefit of Vedic education. Over a period of ten years by this method of learning little by little, the children will not only get by heart the mantras, they will also be able to conduct Vedic rituals themselves and help others in their observance. I refer to this act of performing rituals because even if, in the future, there is no such profession as priest-craft they will be able to manage by themselves. This arrangement becomes necessary since the question arises as to whether anyone would like to let his children take to the profession of priesthood for life.

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Thus all should sincerely take up the task of making Vedic sounds prevail for all time. This is a duty you should undertake to perform not merely for the welfare of the Brahmin caste but also for all the living beings all over the world. This is a duty ordained by God; a divine duty.

We should do this not only for the sake of the present generation, but to absolve ourselves of the sin of betraying the earlier generations. Some may think that no one cares for the Vedas now ; who is going to be interested in the future? What is the use of taking this up now? I do not think so. As the wheel revolves what went down has to come up. Now, as the new civilization has had its day, it has to suffer decline. We have adopted the new styles imagining that there is comfort in them. As we continue to experience it fully we will realise gradually that this new kind of life has no fullness and that we have in fact accepted discomfort. Take America for instance. There people feel that life is empty. They have learnt that there is lack of peace which is the result of experiencing novel pleasures. Knowledgeable people seek our Vedanta, Yoga and Bhajans. Others, desiring to be peaceful by giving up sensory comforts consume large quantities of tranquilizers and get lost in sleep.

This situation is likely to happen in our country too. Though people continue to pursue worldly pleasures imagining that there is something good in it, they are bound to realise at last that even this is not lasting. At that stage people would certainly want to return to spiritual activities which provide permanent peace. When they think of taking to the old Vedic ways which had provided social peace, there may not be opportunities for them to take up to the Vedic practice. If that stage arrives we would have betrayed them by breaking the chain of Vedic life.

It may be argued that our people and those of other countries might study the volumes of research learning of Veda mantras and yoga that are available in plenty. I will counter this.

There is also another question which I have not answered so far. I must do so now. The question is: "What is the meaning of saying that Vedic sounds are protecting the world?. Mantras are only sounds. Those words may have deep meaning. If it is so one can study that meaning in books. Why should a group chant by mouth the Vedas for a whole life time? If the meaning of the Vedas should be preserved without their fading away, these books are meant for that purpose. There would not be a community to preserve the contents of that book. Everyone can read

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the book for himself. Without rendering the meaning why should the Vedic chant be maintained in the old order without change? why should a group spend its life for merely reciting the Vedic sounds?" The question must be answered.

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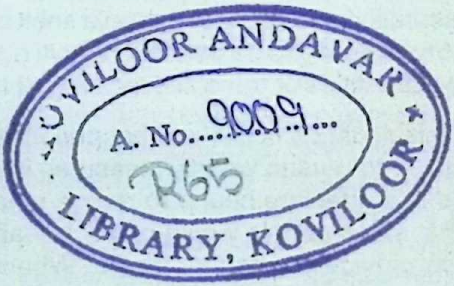

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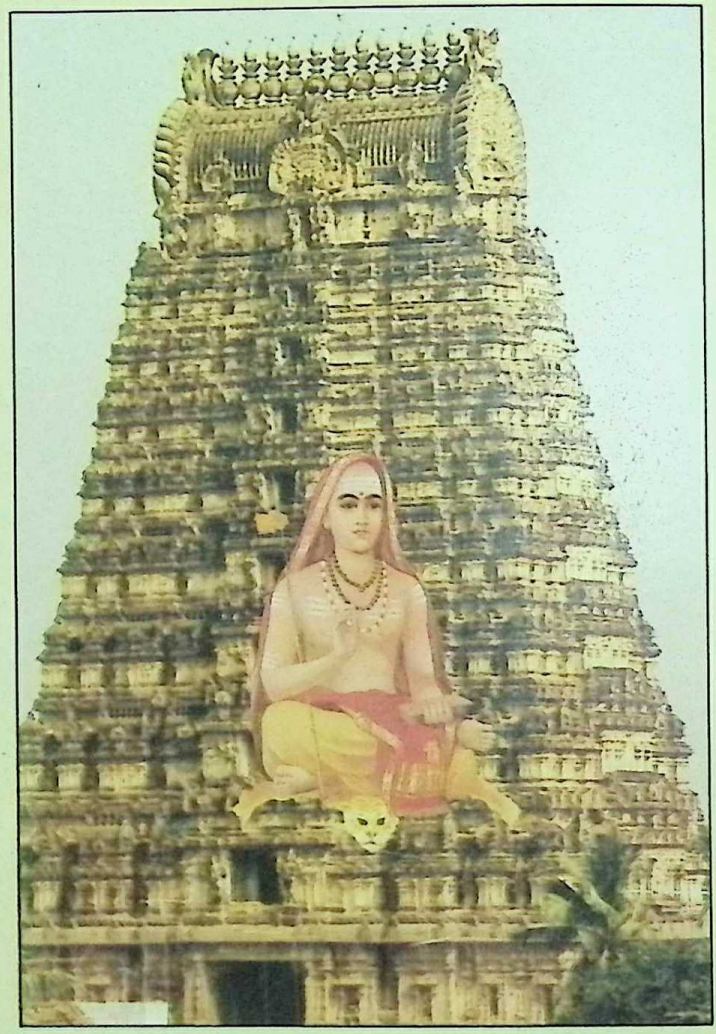
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